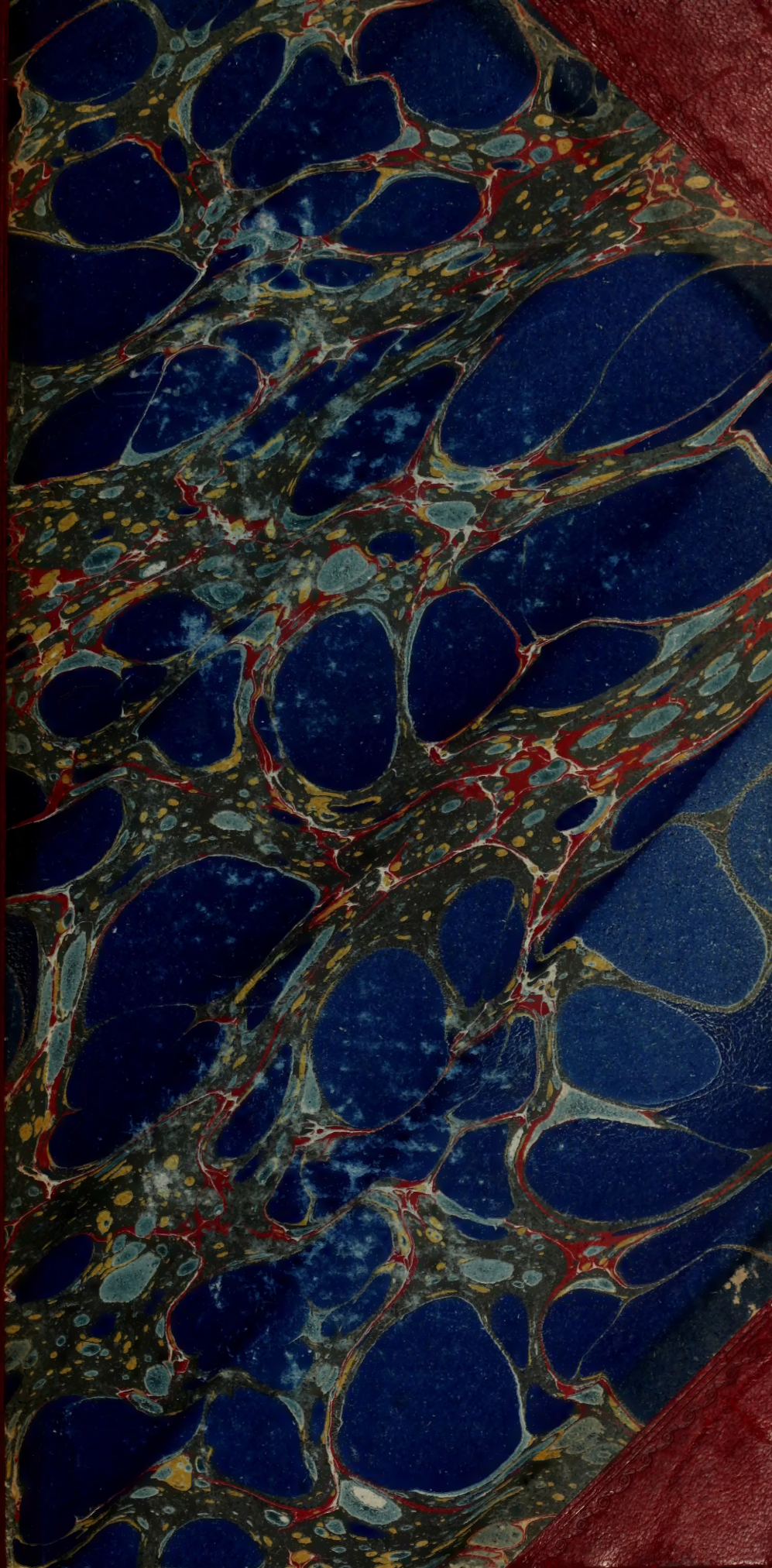





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Ever sincerely yours
Ellen Wood.

"Laden with Golden Grain."

THE
ARGOSY.

EDITED BY
CHARLES W. WOOD.

VOLUME XLIII.

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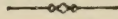
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By LUMB STOCKS, R. A.

Portrait of Mrs. Henry Wood. Frontispiece.

By M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

" 'Ryle,' she said, smiling, 'I have had such a lovely dream' "

" 'Well, Grace, what am I to say?' asked Mr. Baumgarten." "

" 'It is a wonderful likeness, is it not, Lady Grace?' "

" 'She waved him aside in her wilful manner.' "

" 'It will be over in a moment,' she murmured to Regina." "

By FRANK DADD.

" Nearer and nearer came the terrible thunder." "

AND

" Letters from Majorca." "

THE ARGOSY.

JANUARY, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER I.

GREAT AND LITTLE WHITTON.

A RUSTIC congregation was pouring out of a rustic church, one Sunday afternoon; St. Mary's, in the hamlet of Little Whitton, situated about thirty miles from the Metropolis. Great Whitton, some three miles off, was altogether a different affair, for the parish, there, was more aristocratic than rustic, and the living was worth nine hundred a-year: Little Whitton brought its incumbent in only two hundred, all told. The livings were both in the gift of the Earl of Avon, whose seat was near, on the other side Great Whitton. The Incumbent of Great Whitton was an old man, almost past duty; the Incumbent of Little Whitton was an able and attractive man scarcely thirty, the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. Therefore, little wonder need be expressed if some of the Great Whitton families ignored their old rector, who had lost his teeth, and could not by any effort be heard, and came to listen to the eloquent Mr. Baumgarten.

A small, open carriage, the horses driven by a boy, jockey fashion, waited at the church door. The boy was in a crimson jacket and a velvet cap, the postilion livery of the Avon family. The sweeping seat behind was low and convenient, without doors; therefore, when two ladies emerged from the church, they stepped into it unassisted. The one looked about fifty years of age, and walked slowly; the other was a young lady of exceeding fairness, with somewhat haughty features, and haughty eyes, blue as the summer sky. The boy touched his horses, and drove on.

"He surpassed himself to-day, Grace," began the elder lady.

"I think he did, mamma."

"But it is a long way to come—for me. I can't venture out in all weathers. If we had him at Great Whitton, now, I could hear him every Sunday."

"Well, mamma, nothing is more easy than to have him—as I

have said more than once," observed the younger, bending down to adjust something in the carriage, that her sudden heightening of colour might pass unnoticed. "It is impossible that Mr. Chester should last long, and you could get Henry to give him the living."

"Grace, you talk like a child. Valuable livings are not given away so easily: neither are men without connections inducted to them. I never heard that young Baumgarten had any connections; not as much as a father or mother, even: he does not speak of his family. No; the most sensible plan would be for Mr. Chester to turn off that muff of a curate, and take on Baumgarten in his stead."

The young lady threw back her head. "Rectors don't give up their preferments to subside into curates, mamma."

"Unless it is made well worth their while," returned the elder, in a matter-of-fact tone; "and old Chester might make it worth Mr. Baumgarten's."

"Mr. Chester ought to retire. For my part, I cannot imagine how these old clergy can persist in remaining in their livings."

"The clergy must grow old as well as other people, my dear."

"I am not speaking of age so much as of failing faculties. Some men older than Mr. Chester are as capable of fulfilling their duties as ever they were. But Mr. Chester is not."

The young lady received no answer to this, and they went along in silence.

"Mamma!" she exclaimed, when they were about a mile on the road, "we never called to inquire after Mrs. Dane!"

"I did not think of doing so."

"I did. I shall go back again. James!"

The boy, without slackening his speed, half turned on his horse. "My lady?"

"When you come to the corner, drive down the lane and go back to the cottage."

He touched his cap and looked forward again, and Lady Grace sank back in the carriage.

"You might have consulted me first, Grace," grumbled the Countess of Avon. "And why do you choose the longer way, round by the lane?"

"The lane is shady, mamma, and the afternoon sunny: to prolong our drive will do you good."

Lady Grace laughed as she spoke, and it would have taken one deeper in penetration than the Lady Avon had ever been to divine that all had been done with a preconcerted plan: that when her daughter drove from the church door, she had fully intended to proceed part of the way home, and then go back again. Lady Grace Carmel had rather a strong will, which had been fostered by indulgence, for she was an only daughter.

We must notice another of the congregation, one who had left the church by a different door. It was a young lady of two or three and

twenty; she had less beauty than Lady Grace, but a far sweeter countenance. She crossed the churchyard, and opening one of its gates, found herself in a narrow sheltered walk, running through a corner of Whitton Wood. It was the nearest way to her home, Whitton Cottage.

A few paces within it, she stood against a tree, turned and waited: her lips parted, her cheek flushed, and her hand was laid upon her beating heart. Was she expecting anyone to join her? Little doubt of it; and that it was one, all too dear to her, the signs betrayed. The ear of love is strangely fine, and she, Edith Dane, bent her ears to listen: with the first sound of approaching footsteps, she walked hurriedly on. Would she be caught waiting for him? No, no; rather would she hide herself for ever, than betray aught of the deep love that lay in her heart for the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten.

It was Mr. Baumgarten who was following her: he sometimes chose the near way home, too: a tall, graceful man, with pale, classic features, and luminous brown eyes set deeply: but in his face might be seen somewhat of irresolution. He strode on, and overtook Miss Dane.

"How fast you are walking, Edith!"

She turned her head with the prettiest air of surprise possible, her cheeks bright with love's rosy flush. "Oh—is it you, Mr. Baumgarten? I was walking fast to get home to poor mamma."

Nevertheless, it did happen that their pace slackened considerably: in fact, they scarcely advanced at all, but sauntered along side by side, as if to enjoy the beauty of the summer afternoon. "They have been taking me to task to-day," suddenly began Mr. Baumgarten.

"Who? The Avons, do you mean? I saw they were at church."

"Not the Avons. What have they to do with me, Edith?" And Edith blushed at his question; or rather at herself for having mentioned them. "Squire Wells and his wife, with half-a-dozen more, carpeted me in the vestry after service this morning."

"What about?"

"About the duties of the parish; secular, not clerical: I take care that the latter shall be efficiently performed. The old women are not coddled, the younger ones' households not sufficiently looked up, and the school, in the point of plain sewing, is running to rack and ruin."

Mr. Baumgarten had been speaking in a half-joking way, his beautiful eyes alive with merriment. Miss Dane received the news more seriously. "You did not say anything of this at dinner-time; you did not tell mamma."

"No. Why should I tell her? It might only worry her, you know. The school sewing is the worst grievance," he lightly ran on. "Dame Giles's Betsy took some cloth with her, which ought to have gone back a shirt, but which was returned a pair of pillow-cases: the dame boxed Betsy's ears, went to the school and nearly boxed Miss Turner's. It seems to me they could not have a better governess

than she is. However, such mistakes, I am told, are often occurring and the matrons of the parish are up in arms."

"But do they expect you to look after the sewing of the school?" breathlessly asked Edith.

"Not exactly; but they think I might provide a remedy: someone who would do so."

"How stupid they are! I'm sure Miss Turner does what she can with such a tribe. Not that I think she is particularly clever; and were there any lady who would supervise occasionally, it might be better; mamma can't, but ——"

"That is just it," interrupted Mr. Baumgarten, laughing. "They tell me I ought to help Miss Turner to a supervisor, by taking to myself a wife."

He looked at Edith as he spoke, and her face happened to be turned full upon him. The words dyed it with a glowing crimson, even to the roots of her soft brown hair. In her confusion she knew not whether to keep it where it was, or to turn it away: her eyelids had dropped, glowing also; and Edith Dane could have boxed her own ears as heartily as Dame Giles had boxed the unhappy Miss Betsy's.

"It cannot be thought of, you know, Edith."

"What cannot?"

"My marrying. Marry on two hundred a year, and expose my wife, and perhaps others, to poverty and privation? No, that I will never do."

"The Parsonage must be put in repair if you marry," stammered Edith, not in the least knowing what she said, but compelling herself to say something so that she might appear unconcerned.

"And a great deal of money it would take to do it. I told Squire Wells if he could get my tithes increased to double their present value, then I might venture upon a wife. He laughed and replied I might look out for a wife who had ten thousand pounds."

"Such wives are not easily found," murmured Edith Dane.

"Not by me," returned Mr. Baumgarten. "A college chum of mine, never dreaming to aspire to anything better than I possess now, married a rich young widow in the second year of his curacy, and lives on the fat of the land, in pomp and luxury. I would not have done it."

"Why?"

"Because no love went with it; even before his marriage he allowed himself to say as much to me; disparaged her in fact. No; the school and the other difficulties, which are out of my line, must do as they can, yet awhile."

"Of course, mamma would be the proper person to continue to look after these things for you as she used to do, if she were not incapacitated."

"But she is, Edith. And your time is taken up with her, so that you cannot help me."

Miss Dane was silent. Had her time not been taken up, she fancied it might not be deemed quite the thing, in her censorious neighbourhood, to be going about in conjunction with Mr. Baumgarten ; although she was the late Rector's daughter.

The Reverend Cyrus Dane had been many years Rector of Little Whitton ; at his death, Mr. Baumgarten was appointed. Mrs. Dane was left with a very slender provision, derived from an annuity. Her husband had been quite unable to save money, the needs of his parish, the education of his two daughters, and the expenses of living had utterly absorbed his stipend, and kept him sadly poor. So poor that the necessary repairs of the rectory from year to year had never been attended to, and when he died it was in a woeful state of dilapidation. The eldest of his daughters, Charlotte, had married George Brice, a nephew of Brice the surgeon ; he was the junior partner in a shipping house and lived in London.

When Mr. Baumgarten arrived to take possession of his new living, he found the Rectory perfectly uninhabitable. Mrs. Dane had moved out of it to Whitton Cottage, and it was arranged that he should take up his residence with her, paying a certain sum for his board. It was a comfortable arrangement for the young clergyman, and it was a help to Mrs. Dane. He had not the means to put the Rectory into repair, and was told that he must go upon the late Rector's widow to do it ; that she was liable, as in fact she was. But Mr. Baumgarten could not and would not do that. She had not the means to restore it any more than he had. So things were left as they were, to drift, and he made himself happy and contented at Whitton Cottage. He had just entered now upon the second year of his residence with them ; during which Mrs. Dane had been seized with a slow and lingering illness, which must in time terminate fatally.

"Why did she love him ? Curious fool, be still ;
Is human love the growth of human will ?"

A great deal happier for many of us if it were the growth of human will, or under its control. In too many instances it is born of association, of companionship ; and thus had it been at Whitton Cottage. Thrown together in daily intercourse, an attachment had sprung up between the young Rector and Edith Dane ; a concealed attachment ; for he considered his circumstances barred his marriage, and she hid her feelings as a matter of course. He was an ambitious man, a proud man, though perhaps not quite conscious of it, and to encounter the expenses of a family household upon small means appeared to him more to be shunned than any adverse fate on earth. Mr. Baumgarten was of gentle birth, but he had not any private fortune or near relatives ; he had in fact no connections whatever to push him forward

in the Church. For all he could see now, he might live and die at this poor living, and he did not like the prospect.

But we left him walking home from service with Edith, and they soon reached Whitton Cottage. Mr. Baumgarten went on at once to the little room he used as his study, but Edith, at the sound of wheels, lingered in the garden. The Countess of Avon's carriage drew up, and stopped at the gate. Miss Dane went out to it. Grace spoke first, her eyes running in all directions while she did so, as if they were in search of some object not in view.

"Edith, we could not go home without driving round to ask after your mamma."

"Thank you, Lady Grace. Mamma is in little pain to-day and her cough is not troublesome. I think her breathing is generally better in hot weather. Will you not come in?"

"Couldn't think of it, my dear," spoke up the Countess. "Our dinner will be ready; you know I have to take it early. Grace forgot to order James round till we were half-way home."

"Has Mr. Baumgarten got back from church yet?" carelessly spoke Lady Grace, adjusting the lace of her summer mantle.

"He is in his study, I fancy," replied Edith, and she turned round to hide the blush called up by the question, just as Mr. Baumgarten approached them. At his appearance the blush in Grace Carmel's face rivalled that in Edith's.

"You surpassed yourself to-day," cried Lady Avon, as she shook hands with him. "I must hear that sermon again. Would you mind lending it to me?"

"Not at all," he replied, "if you can only make out my hieroglyphics. My writing is plain to me, but I do not know that it would be so to you, Lady Avon."

"When shall I have it? Will you bring it up this evening, and take tea with us? But you will find the walk long, perhaps, after your services to-day; and the weather is hot," she added.

"Very long; too far. Could you not return with us now, Mr. Baumgarten?" interposed her daughter. "Mamma will be glad of you to say grace at table."

Whether it pleased the Countess or not, she had no resource, in good manners, but to second the invitation so unceremoniously given. Mr. Baumgarten may have thought he had no resource but to acquiesce—out of good manners also, perhaps. He stood leaning over the carriage, and spoke, half laughing:

"Am I to bring my sermon with me? If so, I must go in for it. I have just taken it from my pocket."

He came back with his sermon in its black cover. The seat of the carriage was exceedingly large, sweeping round in a half circle. Lady Grace drew nearer to her mother, sitting quite back in the middle of the seat, and Mr. Baumgarten took his seat beside her. Edith Dane cast a look after them as the carriage rolled away, a

pained, envious look ; for her, the sunshine of the afternoon had gone out.

Miss Dane did not like these visits of his to Avon House, and he seemed to be often going there on one plea or another. There, he was surrounded by all the glory and pomp of stately life, and that is apt to tell upon a man's heart ; Grace Carmel, too, was more beautiful than she, and singularly attractive. Not that Edith did, or could, suppose there was any real danger : the difference in their social positions barred that.

Some cloud, unexplained, and nearly forgotten now, had overshadowed Lady Avon's later life. It had occurred, whatever it was, during the lifetime of her lord. She had chosen ever since to live at Avon House in retirement.

An inward complaint, real or fancied, had set in, and the Countess thought herself unable to move to London. Lady Grace had been presented by her aunt, and passed one season in town : then she had returned to her mother, to share perforce in her retirement, at which she inwardly rebelled. Over and over again did Grace wish her brother would marry and come home ; for the place was his, and it would oblige her mother to quit it. But Lord Avon preferred his town house to his country one, and told his mother she was heartily welcome to stay in it. He liked a gay life better than a dull one : as all the world had known when he was young Viscount Standish.

It is just possible that the ennui of Grace's monotonous life at Avon had led to her falling in love with Mr. Baumgarten. That she had done so, that she loved him, with a strong and irrepressible passion, was certain : and she did not try to overcome it, but rather fostered it, seeking his society, dwelling upon his image. Had it occurred to her to fear that she might find a dangerous rival in Edith Dane ? No ; for she cherished the notion that Mr. Baumgarten was attached to herself, and Edith was supposed to be engaged to a distant cousin ; a young man who had been reading with her father during the last year of his life. The young fellow *had* wanted Edith ; he asked her parents for her, he implored her to wait until he should be ordained. Edith had only laughed at him ; but the report, that they were engaged, had in some way got about ; and Lady Grace never thought to doubt it. No ; strange though it may seem, to those who understand the exacting and jealous nature of love, Lady Grace never had cast a fear to Edith's being her rival.

This evening was but another of those Mr. Baumgarten sometimes spent at Avon House, feeding the flame of her ill-starred passion. His manner to women was naturally tender, and to Grace, with her fascinations brought unconsciously to bear upon him, dangerously warm. That he never for one moment had outstepped the bounds of friendly intercourse, Grace attributed entirely to the self-restraint imposed by his inferior position ; but she did not doubt he loved her in secret.

While at dinner he told them, jokingly as he had told Edith, that the parish wanted him to marry. Lady Avon remarked, in answer, that he could not do better; parsons and doctors should always be married men.

"Yes, that's very right, very true," he returned, in the same jesting tone. "But suppose they have nothing to marry upon?"

"But you have something, Mr. Baumgarten."

"Yes, I have two hundred a year; and no residence."

"The Rectory is rather bad, I believe."

"Bad! Well, Lady Avon, you should see it."

"Mr. Dane ought not to have allowed it to get into that state," she remarked; and the subject dropped.

After dinner Mr. Baumgarten stood on the lawn with Grace, watching the glories of the setting sun. Lady Avon, indoors, was beginning to doze; they knew better than to disturb her; this after-dinner sleep, which sometimes did not last more than ten minutes, was of great moment to her, the doctor said. And indeed it was so: when she did not get it, she invariably had a restless night, the over-tired brain not suffering her to sleep. She took it in the dining-room; only moving to the drawing-room when she awoke. Great ceremony was not observed at Avon House. Six or eight servants comprised the indoor household, for the Countess's jointure was extremely limited. The Avon peerage was not a rich one.

Mr. Baumgarten had held out his arm to Lady Grace in courtesy as they began to pace the paths, and she took it. They came to a halt near the entrance gate, both gazing at the beautiful sky, their hands partially shading their eyes from the blaze of sunset, when a little man dressed in black with a white neck-tie was seen approaching.

"Why, here comes Moore!" exclaimed Grace.

He was the clerk at Great Whitton Church. Limping up to the gate, for he was lame with rheumatism, he stood there and looked at Mr. Baumgarten, as if his business lay with him. But Grace, withdrawing her arm from her companion, was first at the gate.

"I beg pardon, my lady, I thought it right to come up and inform the Countess of the sad news—and I'm glad I did, seeing you here, sir. Mr. Chester is gone, my lady."

"Gone!" exclaimed Grace. "Gone where?"

"He is dead, my lady—he is dead, sir. Departed to that bourn whence no traveller returns," continued the clerk, wishing to be religiously impressive and believing he was quoting from Scripture.

"Surely it cannot be!" said Mr. Baumgarten.

"Ay, but it is, sir, more's the pity. And frightfully sudden. After getting home from afternoon service, he said he felt uncommonly tired, he couldn't think why, and that he'd not have his tea till later in the evening. He went up to his room and sat down in the easy chair there and dropped asleep. A sweet, tranquil sleep it was, to all appearance, and Mrs. Chester shut the door and left him. But

after an hour or two, when she sent up to say he had better wake up for his tea, they found him dead. The poor old lady is quite beside herself with the suddenness, and the maids be running about, all sixes and sevens."

"I will go down with you at once, Moore," said Mr. Baumgarten.

"But you will come back and tell us—and tell us how Mrs. Chester is?" said Lady Grace, as he was passing through the gate.

"Yes, certainly, if you wish it," he answered, walking away with so fleet a step that the clerk with difficulty kept up with him.

"I fancy it must have been on his mind, sir," said he; "not direct perhaps, but some inkling like of what was about to happen. This afternoon, when I'd took off his surplice in the vestry: it was him that had read prayers, as usual, Mr. Boyd preaching: I went and put things to rights a bit in the church, and when I got back to the vestry to lock up, I was surprised to see the Rector there still, sitting opposite the outer door, which stood open to the churchyard. Mr. Boyd was gone, but he was not. 'Don't you feel well, sir?' said I. 'Oh yes, I'm well,' he answered, 'but I'm tired. We must all get to feel tired when the end of our life is at hand, Moore, and mine has been a long one.' 'Yes, it has, sir, and a happy one too,' I said, 'thank God.' With that he rose up from his chair, and lifted his hands towards heaven, looking up at the blue sky. 'Thanks be to my merciful God,' he repeated, solemnly, in a hushed sort of tone. 'For that, and all the other blessings of my past life on earth, thanks be unto Him!' With that, he took his hat and stick and walked out to the churchyard," concluded the clerk, "leaving me a bit dazed as 'twere, for I had never heard him talk like that before; he was not the sort o' man to do it."

Within an hour Mr. Baumgarten was back at Avon House. Lady Grace was still lingering in the garden in the summer twilight. He told her in a hushed voice all he had to tell; of the general state of things at the Rectory, of poor Mrs. Chester's sad distress.

"Mamma is expecting you," said Grace. "I broke the news to her, but she wants to hear more particulars."

They went into the drawing-room by the open doors of the window. Mr. Baumgarten gave the best account he could to Lady Avon; and then drank a cup of tea, standing; he would not wait to sit down for it. Still asking questions, Grace passed out again with him to the open air, and strolled by his side along the smooth broad path which led to the entrance gate. When they reached it, he held out his hand to bid her good evening. The opal sky was clear and beautiful; a large star shone in it.

"Great Whitton is in my brother's gift," she whispered, as her hand rested in his. "I wish he would give it to you."

A flush rose to the young clergyman's face. To exchange Little Whitton for Great Whitton had now and then made one of the flighty dreams of his ambition—but never really cherished.

"Do not mock me with pleasant visions, Lady Grace. I can have no possible interest with Lord Avon."

"You could marry then," she softly said, in reference to the conversation at dinner, "and set the parish grumblers at defiance."

"Marry? Yes, I should—I hope—do so," was his reply. His voice was soft as her own; his speech hesitating; he was thinking of Edith Dane.

But how was Lady Grace to divine that? She, alas! gave altogether a different interpretation to the words; and her heart beat with a tender throbbing, and her lips parted with love and hope, and she gazed after him until he disappeared in the shadows of the sweet summer night.

CHAPTER II.

A CURIOUS MISTAKE.

THE Countess of Avon, persuaded into it by her daughter—badgered into it, her ladyship said—exactd a promise from her son that he would bestow the living of Great Whitton upon the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten.

The Earl did not give an immediate consent; in fact, he demurred to give it at all; and sundry letters passed to and fro between Avon House and Paris—for his lordship happened just then to have taken a run over to the French capital. Great Whitton was too good a thing to be thrown away upon young Baumgarten, who was nobody, he told his mother, and he should like to give it to Elliotsen; but Lady Avon, for peace sake at home, urged her petition strongly, and the Earl at length granted it and gave the promise.

The morning the letter arrived containing the promise, and also the information that his lordship was back at his house in London, Lady Avon was feeling unusually ill, and did not get up. Her head was aching violently, and she bade her maid put the letter aside; she would open it later. This she did in the afternoon, when she was sitting up in her dressing-room, and she then told Grace of the arrival of the unexpected promise.

"Oh, let me see it!" exclaimed Grace, in her incautious excitement, holding out her hand for the letter.

She read it hungrily, with flushing cheeks and trembling fingers. Lady Avon could but note this. It somewhat puzzled her.

"Grace," she said, "I cannot think why you should be so eager. What does it signify to you who gets the living?—whether Mr. Baumgarten or another?"

Grace read to the end and folded up the letter before answering. She was a model of calmness now.

"It would be very annoying to us, mamma, if some dolt of a man got it—and Henry, as you know, has no discrimination. Mr. Baum-

garten is safe. He is suitable in all respects ; thoroughly capable, and a gentleman. Besides, *you* like him."

"Well, I do," assented Lady Avon.

In the evening, when Grace was sauntering listlessly in the rocky walk, wondering whether anyone would call that night or not, she saw him. *Him*. He was coming along the path from the Rectory. The old Rector had been buried some days now.

"I have been sitting with Mrs. Chester, and thought I would just ask, in passing, how Lady Avon is," he remarked, swinging through the gate, as if he would offer an apology for calling. "The last time I was here she seemed so very poorly."

"She is not any better, I am sorry to say ; to-day she has not come downstairs at all," replied Grace, meeting his offered hand.

"What will you give me for some news I can tell you?" she resumed, standing before him in the full glow of her beauty, her hand not yet withdrawn from his.

He bent his sweet smile down upon her, his deep, dark eyes speaking the admiration that he might not utter. Ryle Baumgarten was no more insensible to the charms of a fascinating and beautiful girl than are other men—despite his love for Edith Dane. She was awaiting an answer.

"What may I give?" he said. "Nothing that I could give would be of value to you."

"How do you know that, Mr. Baumgarten?"

With a burning blush, for she had spoken unguardedly, Grace laughed merrily, stepped a few steps backward, and drew a letter from her pocket.

"It is one that came to mamma this morning and it has a secret in it. What *will* you give me to read you just one little sentence?"

Mr. Baumgarten, but that Edith and his calling were in the way, would have said a shower of kisses : it is possible that he might in spite of both, had he dared. Whether his looks betrayed him cannot be known ; Lady Grace, blushing still, took refuge in the letter.

Folding it so that only the signature was visible, she held it out to him. He read the name, "Henry."

"Is it—from—Lord Avon?" he said, with hesitation.

"It is from Lord Avon. He does not sign himself in any other way to us. 'Your ever affectionate son, Henry,' it always runs to mamma : and it is no unmeaning phrase ; he is very fond of her. But now for the secret. Listen."

Mr. Baumgarten, suspecting nothing, listened with a smile.

"I have been dunned with applications since I got home," read Grace, aloud, from Lord Avon's letter, "some of them from personal friends ; but as you and Grace make so great a point of it, mother, I promise you that Mr. Baumgarten shall have Great Whitton." In reading, she had left out the words "and Grace." She closed the letter, and then stole a glance at his face.

It had turned pale to seriousness.

"I do not quite understand," he said.

"No? It means that you are appointed to Great Whitton."

"How can I ever sufficiently thank Lord Avon?" he breathed forth.

"Now, is not the knowing that worth something?" laughed she.

"Oh, Lady Grace! It is worth far more than anything I have to give in return. But—it is not a jest, is it? Can it be really true?"

"A jest! Is that likely? You will be publicly appointed in a day or two, and will, of course, hear from my brother. I am not acquainted, myself, with the formal routine of these things. Mamma is rejoicing: she would rather have you here than anyone."

"Lady Avon is too kind," he murmured, abstractedly.

"And what do you think mamma said? Shall I tell you? 'Mr. Baumgarten can marry now.' Those were her words."

Grace spoke with sweet sauciness, secure in the fact that he could not divine her feelings for him—although she believed in his love for her. His answer surprised her.

"Yes, I can marry now," he assented, still half lost in his own thoughts. "I shall do so—soon. I have only waited until some preferment should justify it."

"You are a bold man, Mr. Baumgarten, to make so sure of the lady's consent. Have you asked it?"

"No; where was the use, until I could speak to some purpose? But she has detected my wishes, I am sure of that: and there is no coquetry in Edith."

"Edith!" almost shrieked Lady Grace. "I beg your pardon: I shall not fall."

"What have you done? You have hurt yourself!"

They had been walking close to the miniature rocks, and she had seemed to stumble over a projecting corner.

"I gave my ankle a twist. The pain was sharp," she moaned.

"Pray lean on me, Lady Grace; pray let me support you: you are as white as death."

He wound his arms gently round her, and laid her pallid face upon his shoulder: he thought she was going to faint. For one single moment she yielded to the fascination of the beloved resting-place. Oh! that it could be hers for ever! She shivered, raised her head, and drew away from him.

"Thank you," she said, faintly; "the anguish has passed. I must go indoors now."

Mr. Baumgarten held out his arm, but she did not take it, walking alone with rapid steps towards the house. At the entrance of the glass doors she turned to him.

"I will wish you good evening now."

He held out his hand, but she did not appear to see it. She ran in, and he turned away to depart, thinking she must be in great pain.

Lady Grace shut herself in the drawing-room. For a few moments

she rushed about like one possessed, in her torrent of anger. As Congreve tells us, "Hell has no fury like a woman scorned."

Then she sat down to her writing-desk and dashed off a blotted and hasty note to Lord Avon—which would just save the post.

"Give the living to anyone you please, Harry, but not to Ryle Baumgarten : bestow it where you will, but not on him. There are reasons why he would be utterly unfit for it. Explanations when we meet."

During this, Mr. Baumgarten was hastening home, the great news surging in his brain. Edith was at the gate, not looking for him, of course ; merely enjoying the air of the summer's night. That's what she said she was doing when he came up. He caught her by the waist, and drew her between the trees and the privet-hedge, and began to kiss her. She cried out, and gazed at him in wonder.

"Edith, do you think I am mad ? I believe I am—mad with joy ; for the time has come that I may ask you to be my wife."

"Your wife ?" she stammered, for in truth that prospect had seemed farther off than heaven.

He drew her to him again in the plenitude of his emotion. Her heart beat wildly against his, and he laid her face upon his breast, more fondly than he had laid another's, not long before.

"You know how I have loved you : you must have seen it, though I would not speak ; but I could not marry while my income was so small. It would not have been right, Edith."

"If you think so—no."

"But, oh, my dearest, I may speak now. Will you be my wife ?"

"But—what has happened ?" she asked.

"Ah, what ! Promotion has come to me, my dear one. I am presented to the living of Great Whitton."

"Of Great Whitton ! Ryle !"

"It is quite sure. Lord Avon's mother asked him to give it to me, it seems, and he generously complied. Edith, will you reject me, now I have Great Whitton ?"

She hid her face ; she felt him lovingly stroking her hair. "I would not have rejected you when you had but Little Whitton, Ryle."

"Yours is not the first fair face which has been there this night, Edith, he said in a laughing whisper. "I had Lady Grace's there but an hour ago."

A shiver seemed to dart through her heart. Her jealousy of Lady Grace had been almost as powerful as her love for Mr. Baumgarten.

"Grace said, in a joking kind of way, that her mother had remarked I could marry now I had Great Whitton. So I told Grace that I should do so—one word leads to another, you know, Edith, and that I had only waited for preferment to marry you, my best love. As I was speaking, she managed somehow to twist her ankle. The pain must have been intense, for she turned as white as death, and

I had to hold her to me. But I did not pay myself for my trouble, as I am doing now—with kisses.”

She lifted her face up and looked in his. “You would only have liked to do so, Ryle.”

“I have liked to do so!” he repeated, smothering back a glimmer of consciousness. “Edith, my whole love is yours.”

A little more love-making, a little more lingering in the soft shade of the evening twilight, and then they went in together and imparted the great news to Mrs. Dane

Some days passed on. Lady Avon rather wondered that she did not hear more from her son, but supposed he had written direct to Mr. Baumgarten. Grace said nothing. The two lovers, over at Whitton Cottage, were busily planning out the future.

One morning there was a startling announcement in the *Times*. As Lady Avon’s eyes fell upon it, she truly thought they must be playing her false; that her sight was failing her.

The living of Great Whitton was bestowed upon the Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen, a personal friend of the Earl of Avon.

Her ladyship called out for her daughter in commotion; she sent her maid, Charity, to hasten her. Grace feared her mother was worse, and flew to the room with rapid steps.

“What can be the meaning of this, Grace?” gasped the Countess. “Henry has not given the living to Mr. Baumgarten, after all; he has given it to young Elliotsen!”

“Oh, indeed,” said Grace, carelessly. “Harry can do as he likes, I suppose.”

“No, he can’t, in such a case as this. At least he ought not. Once his promise was given to me, it should have been kept. I cannot understand his going from it. It is not like him.”

“Well, mamma, I don’t see that it matters to us, whichever way it may be.”

“But it does matter. I don’t want a simpering young fellow like Wilfred Elliotsen down here, and whose wife goes in for rank Puseyism besides. She has only been waiting for his appointment to a church, report says, to make him play all kinds of antics in it; she leads him by the nose.”

Grace laughed.

“It is no laughing matter,” reproved her mother, “for me or Mr. Baumgarten. I shall be ashamed to look him in the face. And he had begun to lay out plans for his marriage with Miss Dane and their life at Great Whitton!”

“How do you know that?” asked Grace, quickly.

“Mrs. Brice told me so when she was here yesterday,” replied Lady Avon. She knew from the Danes that Ryle Baumgarten was to have Great Whitton and to marry Edith. Why Henry should be so changeable I cannot imagine.”

Lady Avon was evidently very much annoyed, and justly so; annoyed at the fact, and annoyed because she was unable to understand her son, who was neither capricious nor inconsiderate. She wrote a letter of complaint to him that day, and awaited his answer.

The ill news broke abruptly upon Mr. Baumgarten. The little hard-worked, inoffensive doctor, Mr. Brice, who had a kind heart and never failed to have a kind word for his patients, chanced to see in the *Times* the same paragraph that Lady Avon saw, and on the same morning.

"Bless my heart," he exclaimed, "what an unlucky thing! How could Baumgarten have made such a mistake? He said Lady Grace told him. Perhaps it was she who mistook the matter!"

Away he hastened to Whitton Cottage, the newspaper in his pocket, and into the clergyman's presence, who sat in his little study writing a sermon. And when he got there, he felt at fault how to open the ball. It seemed so cruel a thing to do. Mr. Baumgarten, who looked gay and unconscious, led up to it.

"Have you heard any particular news this morning?" began the surgeon, after a few words had passed.

"No," lightly replied Mr. Baumgarten; "I've not seen anyone to tell me any; I have been busy since breakfast with my sermon for next Sunday. Nearly the last I shall preach at Little Whitton, I expect."

Mr. Brice coughed. "Have you heard from Lord Avon?" he asked.

"Not yet; I rather wonder at it. Every morning I look for a letter from him, but it does not come. He may be in France again for all I know myself; I don't like to call at Avon House until my appointment is confirmed. It would look pushing; as if I were impatient."

"Well, I—I saw a curious paragraph in the newspaper just now, about Great Whitton being given away; but it was another name that was mentioned, not yours," said Mr. Brice. "I thought I'd come here at once to see if you knew anything about it."

"Not anything; newspapers are always making mistakes," smiled Mr. Baumgarten.

Mr. Brice took the paper from his pocket. Finding the place, he laid it before the clergyman, who read it. Read it twice over, and began to feel somewhat less easy. He read it a third time, aloud.

"We are authorised to state that the valuable living of Great Whitton, Homeshire, has been bestowed by its Patron, the Earl of Avon, upon the Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen."

There ensued a pause. The two gentlemen were looking at one another, each questioningly.

"It must be a mistake," said Mr. Baumgarten. "Lord Avon would not give the living to me, and then give it to someone else."

"The question is—did he give it to you?" returned Mr. Brice. "Perhaps the mistake lies in your having thought so."

"I saw it in his own handwriting, in his letter to his mother.

Lady Grace showed it to me ; at least, a portion of it. He wrote in answer to an appeal Lady Avon had made to him to give me the living. His promise was a positive one. It is this newspaper that makes the mistake, Brice ; it cannot be otherwise."

"Anyway, we will hope so," briskly added the surgeon. But he spoke more confidently than he felt : and perhaps Mr. Baumgarten had done the same.

Lord Avon's reply to his mother's letter of complaint and inquiry came to her by return of post, and ran as follows :

"MY DEAR MOTHER,—I cancelled my promise of giving the living to Baumgarten at Grace's request. She wrote to me post haste some days ago, telling me there were reasons why Baumgarten would be utterly unfit to hold Great Whitton, and begging me to bestow it upon anyone, rather than upon him. That is all I know ; you must ask an explanation of Grace. Of course, I assumed she was writing for you. It is settled now, and too late to change back again. Elliotsen will do very well in the living, I daresay. As to his wife wanting to turn and twist him to attempt foolish things in the church, as you seem to fear, I think it hardly likely. If she does, he must put her down.

"Ever your loving son, HENRY."

"Yes, I *did* write to Henry, mamma ; I *did* ask him not to give the living to Mr. Baumgarten," avowed Grace, with passionate emphasis, when questioned, her cheeks aflame, for the subject excited and tried her. "My reason was that I consider him an unfit man to hold it."

"Why, it was at your request that I asked Henry to give it to Mr. Baumgarten ; you let me have no peace until I consented," retorted Lady Avon.

"But, after reflection, I came to the conclusion that I ought not to have pressed it, that he ought not to have it, and would not do in it ; and the shortest way to mend the matter was by writing to Harry. That's all."

Lady Avon glanced keenly at her daughter. She was mentally asking herself what it all meant—the burning face, the tone sharp as a knife and telling of pain, the capricious conduct in regard to the preferment. But she could not tell ; she might have her suspicions, and very ridiculous suspicions too, not at all to be entertained ; but she could not tell.

"I am sorry that a daughter of mine should have condescended to behave so ; you best know what motive prompted it, Grace. To bestow a living and then snatch it away again in caprice is sheer child's play. It will be a cruel blow to Ryle Baumgarten."

A cruel blow it was. Lady Avon turned to her desk after speaking these words to her daughter, and began a note to the young clergyman, feeling very much humbled in mind as she wrote it. In the most plausible way she could, a lame way at best, she apologised for

the mistake which had been made, adding she hardly knew whether it might be attributed to her son, to herself, or to both, and pleaded for Mr. Baumgarten's forgiveness. This note she despatched by her footman to Whitton Cottage.

Mr. Baumgarten chanced to be standing in the house's little hall as the man approached. He received the note from him.

"Is there any answer to take back, sir? My lady did not say."

"I will see," replied Mr. Baumgarten. "Sit down, Robert."

Shutting himself into his study, he opened the note. For a few happy moments—if moments of suspense ever can be happy—he indulged in a vision that all might still be right; that the note was to tell him so. It was short, filling only one side of the paper, and he stood while he read it.

Before he had quite come to the end, before he had well gathered in its purport, a shock, singular in its effects, struck Mr. Baumgarten. Whether his breath stopped, or the circulation of his heart stopped, or the coursing of his pulses stopped, he could not have told; but he sank down in a chair powerless, the letter falling on the table from his nerveless hand. A strange, beating movement stirred him inwardly, his throat was gasping, his eyelids were fluttering, a sick faintness had seized upon him.

But that he struggled against it with desperate resolution, he believed he should have fainted. Once before he had felt something like this, when he was an undergraduate at Oxford, and he had been rowing against time to win a match. They said then, those around him, that he had over-exercised his strength. But he had not been exercising his strength now, and he was far worse this time than he had been then.

He sat perfectly still, his arms supported by the elbows of the chair, and recovered by degrees. After a bit, he took up Lady Avon's note to read it more fully, and then he knew and realised that all, to which he had been so ardently looking forward, was at an end.

The servant was seated in the little hall, quietly waiting, when Mr. Baumgarten came out of his study.

"Her ladyship's note does not require an answer, Robert," he said with apparent coolness. "How is she to-day?"

"Middling, sir. She seemed much upset this morning, Charity told us, by a letter she got from his lordship in London," added Robert. "Good day, sir."

Mr. Baumgarten nodded in answer. He stood at the door looking out, apparently watching the man away. The sun was shining in Ryle Baumgarten's face, but the sun which had been latterly shining on his heart, illuminating it with colours of the brightest and sweetest phantasy—that sun seemed to have set for ever.

(To be continued.)

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH.

WE had been out shopping all the afternoon and got home, very tired, at ten minutes past six. Aunt Di was cross. We must be keeping the dinner waiting, she said, and she laid the blame upon me. Eva Bellair ran into the hall as we entered, and were putting down sundry small parcels on the slab.

"Dinner's waiting, Miss Dinah," she said. "It's past six."

"I know it," returned Aunt Di snappishly. "It is Grace's fault—looking for half an hour at a frock-piece or a ribbon before she decides upon it!"

"Oh, Aunt Di, I'm not as bad as that," I said. "We had a good many things to buy, you know; and in a little country place like this, with just its one or two drapers' shops in it, we have not the choice that is put before us in large towns."

"And in choosing things for one's wedding, one must be particular, Miss Di," put in Eva.

Her tone was peculiar, full of covert mockery, and I turned from the slab to look at her. I was beginning to doubt Eva's good faith; I had doubted it for some little time. She looked wondrously beautiful. A slight, graceful figure, standing there in her dinner dress of soft pink cashmere, faced with satin, adorned with lace; her keen eyes, of violet, veiled within their long lashes, her expression of face innocent as the day. But I doubted her.

Aunt Dinah was going up the stairs. "You can tell them to serve dinner," she said to Eva. "I shall not be long."

Neither was I long. In five minutes I had changed my frock—as we girls called it then—for my simple black silk, with its bit of good white lace at the throat and wrists. We were still in slight mourning for my father. As I stood hastily doing my hair, the glass gave back a pleasant thoughtful face, though not a handsome one. The auburn hair was soft and silky, the complexion fair, the grey eyes were steadfast, honest eyes, the features insignificant, nothing to boast of. All the time I was contrasting my poor face in a sad sort of manner with the handsome face, the brilliant colour and the flashing violet eyes of Eva Bellair. Alas, I had reason to fear she was stealing my lover from me.

They were going in to dinner when I went downstairs. Aunt Di had done nothing in the way of dress, except to put on a smart cap with peach blossoms in it; she was too tired, she said. She took the head of the table as usual, and Margaret went into Tom's place at the foot; I and Eva sat side by side, opposite the fire. Tom had not come home to dinner that evening; it sometimes happened so.

We lived plainly. The superfluities of modern days had not then

come into fashion for simple families. Dinner was soon over, and we went back to the drawing-room.

It was a double-room ; a good sized one and a small one, opening to each other. Aunt Di went at once to the smaller one, as she generally did, and seated herself on the capacious old sofa. She liked to be away from our chatter in the other room she told us. Presently I followed her, and sat down at the table with my work. A girl on the point of marriage has no end of sewing to do. Mine, this evening, lay in hemming strips of fine muslin.

My father, Thomas East, had been the chief solicitor in Pressgate. He had a large practice, both town and country, and was universally respected as a man of integrity, clever and painstaking. But he died early ; just as Tom, our only brother, was of age and able to succeed him. Our mother had died years before, and her sister, Aunt Dinah, Miss Richardson by title, had then come to take care of me and Margaret. She continued with us after papa died, all things going on in the home as before. Papa had died well off ; leaving three hundred a year to each of us, his two daughters ; which would descend afterwards to our children if we married and had any. Aunt Di had her own money ; a nice little fortune.

I was already engaged—to Lionel Payne. He was a civil engineer, steady and clever, and likely to get on in his profession. We were first engaged in the spring, and it was now October. During most of the interval he had been in Sweden, superintending the making of a railway. He there met with an accident, upon which fever supervened, and he was sent home to recover health and strength. In January he was to go back to Sweden, and—I with him. Meanwhile, now that he was better, he busied himself with some local works belonging to the same company.

About six weeks ago there came to us on a visit, Eva Bellair. Her mother had been a cousin of papa's, had married an officer in the army, and gone out with him to the West Indies. There Captain Bellair had died, and Eva, the only child, was sent to England for her education, her vacations being spent with some relative of her father's. This relative was aged and ill ; Eva, who had now left school, no doubt found her house dull, and she wrote offering to pay a visit to us. I and Margaret eagerly accepted it : girls are ever ready for fresh companions.

Eva was beautiful, without doubt. She was vain and worldly to her fingers' ends ; but—was she also deceitful ?

I think Lionel had been taken with her when she came. She seemed to burst upon us all as a lovely vision, capturing our hearts by storm. The only one she did not fascinate was Tom. It was singular that Tom had disliked her at first sight ; she gave him a feeling of aversion instead of the opposite.

"Fall in love with *her* !" cried he, when, coming home from church in a storm the first Sunday, he had held the umbrella over

her, and we, sister-like, teased him afterwards. "Look here, girls; if I were obliged to make a choice from the two, I'd rather take old Aunt Di."

And Tom had never swerved from that day to this. Courteous he ever was to Eva, as his guest—for, in good truth, the house was Tom's, not ours—but there his attentions ended. In her quiet, covert way, she had tried to get up a flirtation with Tom; but, to use his own words, he would not see it. And this left only Lionel Payne to fall back upon.

"She would have liked Tom," remarked Aunt Dinah, shrewdly, who saw more sometimes than we gave her credit for. "Tom is a good match for any girl, and she has not a penny piece in the world. But I should not like Tom to have *her*."

I was hemming away at my muslin, and Aunt Di nodded over her knitting, when Mr. Payne came in. He was of middle height, with fair whiskers, and a handsome, though perhaps undecided face, with a peculiarly sad look in his hazel eyes. Shaking hands with us all, he stayed talking a little with me, chiefly about the weather, and then went back to the larger room.

Presently it struck me that they were very quiet. Margaret was copying music at the table; Lionel and Eva, seated near the fire, had their heads together over a skein of crimson silk, which resisted their best endeavours in its determination not to be wound properly. These two were excellent friends now; more than friends, one might say; but when she came first and had her eye fixed on Tom, she could not tolerate Lionel. I verily believe they hated each other, after a polite, well-bred fashion; and Eva was lavish of her veiled sarcasms on him behind his back. But all that had changed now.

"Yes, I suppose it's all very right and proper," I said to myself, as I watched them whispering together over the silk. And yet—was he learning to love her?—had she cast her spells over him to that extent? If not, why did he linger with her night after night, and neglect me?

With an irritation which did not often trouble me, I threw down my work and went to vent my spleen on the piano; which, alarmed and indignant at such usage from my usually gentle fingers, resounded like thunder for a few moments, and finally died away in low murmurs faint as the whispers of an accusing spirit.

With one hand wandering in listless apathy over the keys, I turned half round to find that Margaret had left the room. The other two were talking by the fire, far enough away from me. Lionel had his back towards me, and I could only see his profile. Miss Bellair stood in front of him, the light from the chandelier falling in soft showers on her graceful head and raven hair. With a nameless pang I felt that my presence was forgotten, or unregarded; and yet, as I watched the ever-varying expression of her radiant face, and mentally contrasted it with my own pale features, I did not wonder.

They were talking of flowers, I think, for she held in her hand a ruby glass vase, in which was a tiny bouquet I had that morning culled from a few pet plants, relics of the summer, which, by dint of coaxing and divers placings in sunny corners, where the warm light would shine upon them, had been persuaded to bloom into the autumn. Her restless fingers were busy arranging a bud here, a leaf there, and then holding it out, as if to take in the artistic effect. Presently Lionel stretched up his hand to a painting which hung beside the glass over the mantelpiece. It was a likeness of Aunt Di, taken when she was young and fair. The previous day had been her birthday, and we girls had intertwined branches of green cedar with the open carved oak frame. Lionel now broke off a spray of the cedar, put it with a rose he had taken from the vase, and then presented it to Eva. She took it with a heightened bloom, and a half smile rippled on her lips as she held it to them.

What was there in all this to send the blood rushing in great surges of pain to my heart, though I strove to tell myself it might be only pastime? At that moment my brother Tom came in, bringing a gentleman who was quite a stranger. "Grace," he said, "you have heard me speak of this friend—Mr. Malcolm. My younger sister Grace," he added to the guest.

I felt bewildered, unable to respond. Tom looked as if he thought I must have been taking a stolen nap, and had not properly awakened from it.

For the scene I had just witnessed was full of hidden suggestions. Once, before Lionel and I had plighted our troth openly, he had sent me a spray of the cedar tree, and was anxious that I should know the language of the gift—"I live for thee."

How I got through that evening I never knew. There was an infinite deal of general laughing and talking, and I have a confused remembrance of a long conversation with Mr. Malcolm, of which literature formed the chief theme. He was evidently a well-read man; had distinguished himself at Cambridge; and—he appeared to be very much taken with me!

Lionel went away first, saying he had letters to write, and shaking hands in his easy, quiet way, with two or three of us. When my turn came I hoped he might give me a tender word or glance. He did nothing of the kind; only laid his fingers quietly in mine for a moment, and wished me a cold good evening. That night I lay and cried after everybody else in the house must have been asleep. A feeling lay upon me that he was hopelessly bewitched by Eva, and that our love was over.

"Who is Mr. Malcolm?" asked Eva the next morning at breakfast.

"A downright good fellow," answered Tom; which might not have been the answer she expected.

"Where does he live?"

"Just now he is living at the Queen's Hotel in this town. He has just come into an estate four miles off, and into some complicated law business as well, which I am trying to disentangle for him."

"An estate four miles off!" repeated Aunt Di, looking up. "Do you mean Malcolm Park, Tom?"

"Just so, Aunt Di."

"Well, I never!" cried aunt. "You ought to have said so last night, Tom. I had no idea he was one of those Malcolms."

"Is the estate a large one, Mr. Tom?" asked Eva.

"Very fair in a moderate way—about three thousand a year," replied Tom.

Eva opened her eyes. "Three thousand a year! Is he married, Mr. Tom?"

"Not that I know of," was Tom's short answer.

They all went out that night to a lecture. I excused myself, and waited at home, hoping for Lionel Payne.

He did not come quickly. At eight o'clock I grew uneasy. Half-past eight, hopeful still, I turned down the gas in the parlour, drew up the blind, and sat by the window, looking out upon the moonlight. Presently, one, two, three—nine strokes pealed, like a knell, from the old church not far off; and I knew it was useless to watch for him now.

But no; a ring sounded at the gate bell, and I saw one of the servants go out to answer it. It was only a parcel. It was not he. I sat back in my chair and closed my eyes, half sick with the disappointment. He must have gone to the lectures to join Eva.

When I looked up from my despair the room had turned dark and chilly. A cloud was passing over the moon. In my heart were shadows too. I burst into a flood of bitter tears; and, covering my face with my hands, sobbed aloud. It was very silly and undignified; but the stricken spirit gives way at times.

"Why, Grace, what is the matter?"

Had anyone shot me, I could not have started up more quickly. Lionel stood there. In my sobbing I had not heard him enter.

He drew a chair beside mine, and we sat talking in the moonlight. I let him gather what it was which caused my distress. At first he did not deny it or answer; he sat gazing outwards as if in thought, the sad expression in his eyes being very perceptible then.

"I never thought you were given to indulging fancies, Grace," he said at last.

"I do not think I have been."

"My dear—don't you know—don't you remember," he continued, his voice broken with an emotion at which I greatly wondered, "that I could not leave you for another without breaking our oath?"

"Lovers' vows are lightly kept," I answered.

"I regard that oath as a solemn obligation, Grace," he rejoined earnestly. "If ever I am tempted to break it—if ever *you* should

be tempted on your side, no luck, as I look upon it, will follow the delinquent."

"I shall never break it, Lionel. I shall be faithful unto death."

"And I also, Heaven helping me," he whispered, as he leaned towards me and kissed my lips.

The kiss was followed by a heavy sigh. He seemed ill at ease. I think his love *had* left me, despite the kiss and the words.

Voices at the gate proclaimed their return from the lecture. I got up in a fright to run to the drawing-room. Aunt Dinah would have scolded at our sitting in the little parlour without lights.

It was in that same little parlour, lighted then by the spring moon, that I and Lionel Payne had made our betrothal. Aunt Di was in bed with headache that evening; Margaret was gone up to give her some tea, and we were alone. "I swear to you, Grace, upon my solemn oath before Heaven, to be faithful to you until death shall part us," he had said standing, his hands lifted—and he had made me take the same oath. Well, I asked nothing better than to keep it. But would he?

II.

As the weeks went on, events went on with them. David Malcolm became a frequent visitor at our house. He was a companionable earnest-minded man of about thirty years, who had travelled a good deal and was full of information. Not to be called a handsome man by any means, but when he smiled his face seemed to light up all over, and his brown eyes had a kindly laugh in them.

Eva Bellair made a dead set at him: a man possessing three thousand a year was worth it. But Mr. Malcolm did not respond. Like Tom, he allowed it to be seen that he should never care for her. So she threw her forces back with redoubled strength upon Lionel.

And he seemed to drift away from me. Never another loving word had been spoken by him to me since that night when he reminded me of his oath—and mine. Eva seemed to possess for him the fascination of a basilisk. It was with Eva he lingered; with her he played at dominoes; over her he leaned to turn her music, his own fair head touching her purple-black hair. What was to come of it? What would be the ending?

I don't think I had ever been so much taken to as one afternoon when David Malcolm came in and made me an offer of marriage. The rest were out, and he had found me alone. I stood like a simpleton, utterly at a loss for words.

"Don't you care for me, Miss East? Don't you think you can learn to care for me?" he implored, in my stupid silence.

"Oh, I care for you very much; that is, I like you very much, but not in that way," I stammered at last. "I cannot be your wife; it is impossible."

"Why is it impossible?"

I felt my face burning. "Did you not know," I murmured, "that I am going to marry Mr. Payne?"

"But are you going to marry him?—is he going to marry you? I do not think it looks like it," he said.

"You knew of it, then?"

"I know what your brother has told me: that you *were* engaged to him. But surely you cannot allow yourself to be so still?"

What with one thing or another—the home truth in these words, and the mortification it brought, and my shyness just now altogether, which told upon me, I burst into tears. David Malcolm took my hand, and spoke to me soothingly.

"I have been too hasty," he continued; "I should have had patience and waited. My dear—for indeed you will ever be dear to me—we will defer ——"

"But indeed I am not able to marry you, now or ever," I interrupted—and I had half a mind to tell him of the oath which I had taken to be faithful to Lionel Payne, whatever might betide, until death. "I thank you very truly for your kindness to me, Mr. Malcolm, and for what you have said; but I can never marry you."

"We shall see," he cheerfully concluded, with the sunny smile in his eyes and on his lips. We did not speak of this offer, either he or I. It remained a secret between us.

One day Aunt Di, in her old-world, straightforward way, took Eva Bellair to task. "What do you mean by monopolising Mr. Payne whenever he is here?" she asked. "It is unseemly."

"Unseemly?" repeated Eva, jestingly. "Oh, Miss Di!"

"You know that he is shortly to marry Grace?"

"Oh, he only laughs and talks a bit with me," said Eva. "There's no harm in that, Miss Dinah—they are not married yet."

We had some intimate friends, the Bettingtons, living in a pretty house, Danvers Cottage, at the other end of Pressgate. They were, like many other people, much taken with Eva, and she was invited to stay at their house.

"And that will terminate your visit to us, Miss Bellair," said Aunt Di, straightforwardly. "Your own people will, of course, be wanting you back for Christmas."

It was a bitter November day, the day Eva went to the Bettingtons, with December near at hand. "I shall have Lionel to myself now," ran my thought; which was all the regret I threw after her.

But there is an old saying which tells you not to reckon without your host. I had reckoned without Lionel. For one evening that he passed with us, he spent five or six at Danvers Cottage.

Some star in the actress line came to Pressgate, and there was a grand performance given in the theatre. Tom took a box for us. Chancing to meet Lionel Payne the same morning, he told him

there would be room for him if he liked to come, but Lionel, while thanking him, said he feared he was engaged.

And when we got there a little late, for Tom was detained by a client, there in a box on the opposite side, sat Lionel with the Bettingtons and Eva Bellair; Eva next to him. She had a glittering diamond locket on her neck, and I wondered who had given it to her. No girl in the house was so lovely as she, with her flashing violet eyes and purple-black hair, her rose-tinted cheeks, and her animation. His fair head was bending to her perpetually, almost touching her pretty ear now and again. Behind *my* chair sat David Malcolm, talking to me in a low voice at intervals: but never an allusion did he make to the opposite box.

"Grace East must be a simpleton to persist in her engagement to young Payne!" said one lady to another. "It is easy to be seen where his love is lavished."

"Possibly it never was given to Grace," answered the other. "She has three hundred a year, you know; Lionel Payne's attraction may have lain in *that*."

"Any way, he is behaving very badly now."

This conversation, its freedom proving that the speakers spoke for their own ears only, reached Tom. He had gone into a box which joined theirs, and overheard it. When he came back to us, a dark frown disfigured his usually pleasant face. The performance came to a close, and we went home, Lionel never having come near our box.

Aunt Dinah very soon wished Tom good night, and departed to bed, saying she was tired. Margaret followed her from the room. I was following Margaret, when Tom laid his hand upon my arm, and shut the door.

"Stay here a minute or two, Grace," he said. "I want to speak to you."

"Yes?" I answered, going back to stand near the bright embers of the decaying fire, my heart beating wildly.

"You must be aware that this thing must end, Grace."

I did not ask him what thing. I knew too well. "But how can it?" I asked. "What can be done?"

"I will see what—with to-morrow's dawn," he quickly answered. "I did not like to act without first speaking to you, my dear."

"It may be just a—glamour, Tom. A craze which has come over him for the moment, and—and will pass away. I cannot see how we are to part."

Tom looked at me. "Not see how? Don't you *wish* it, Grace? after that spectacle presented to your eyes to-night, and all his recent neglect? Nothing is more easy."

I was thinking of our oath. Turning my head a little from Tom, I told him of it in a whisper. My mood was tragic enough. Tom's was not. He burst into a laugh.

"That's the best joke I've heard for many a week, Gracie. Quite romantic ! Sworn, have you, to be true to one another till death ?"

"Yes. 'Faithful unto death.' Only a little while ago—since this trouble began—he told me he should keep it. So shall I."

Tom was silent.

"Any way, Grace, he must choose between you," he spoke, after consideration. "I should, in your place, call my own proper pride to my aid, and fling him to the winds. He shall not carry on with both of you ; rely upon that. If he chooses (as you seem to wish it) to come back to his allegiance, he must not again meet Eva Bellair. If he prefers her, why then I hope I need not suggest how you, Grace, ought to act, oath or no oath."

Tom was as good as his word. The first thing he did after breakfast the next morning, was to present himself at Lionel Payne's rooms : and there he learnt that Fate had been, so to say, quicker than he.

When Lionel got home the previous night, after leaving the theatre, he found a telegram awaiting him from Sweden. Some mischief had occurred in the works then in process there, and Lionel was needed. The order to him was imperative—to set off without an hour's delay.

As Tom went in, Lionel was fastening down his portmanteau and collecting his rugs and overcoats together. Another minute or two must see him on his way to the train, if he would catch it. What passed between them I do not know ; it could not have been much. Lionel said, looking very foolish, that he was aware the present state of affairs could not and ought not to go on ; that as he sat at the theatre last night he had taken more shame to himself than anybody else could award him, and had resolved there and then that it should end. He added that he would write to me ; on the journey if he could possibly get a moment for it ; if not, as soon as he reached Sweden.

The letter came to me ; it had been written in pencil on his knees as he travelled along in the train. It was, if I may so put it, an abject kind of letter, betokening misery. He did not expressly release me ; but he said that he knew I must consider him too contemptible to retain any regard for him ; and that his best and only plan now was to remain in Sweden for good, away from the civilized world. As to Miss Bellair, he should never again see her. The spell of infatuation which had seized hold of him, and he had been weak and wicked enough to yield to, was gone for ever.

That was the substance of the letter. It did not say, "will you in future, when my time of penitence shall have spent itself, suffer our engagement to be renewed ;" but yet, it did not explicitly release me from it. The oath was not alluded to by word or hint.

III.

WEEKS and months went by. David Malcolm was frequently at our house, and it was quite an open secret that he came for my sake. Once, and once only, he renewed his offer to me. I told him that I was still bound to Lionel Payne; for so indeed I considered myself to be. But for that—how gladly would I have married David!

I began to grow pale and thin. Every day almost I was in dread of receiving a letter from Lionel reminding me of my vow and asking me to be his wife. But no such letter came; business people heard from him occasionally, but that was all. He was very busy in Sweden, and his work was evidently appreciated, for his salary, we heard, had been raised, and he had now seven hundred a year.

“My dear, how long is our probation to last?” David Malcolm said to me one day when we were alone. “Is it that which is wearing you out, Gracie? Oh, my darling, if you would but come to me and let me comfort you!”

And all the answer I could make him was to burst into tears.

One night in June, when the nights are at the shortest and the days at the longest, a strange thing happened to me. Aunt Dinah was ill. I had wished to sit up with her, proposing to snatch a bit of sleep in the easy chair in her room; but aunt would not hear of it. She was not so ill as all that, she said, and could call to me if she wanted anything in the night, or ring up Rachel.

It was a bright and beautiful night. At a quarter to twelve, when I entered my bedroom after lingering with Aunt Di, the large moon was shining in the clear sky. I did not undress. Sitting down in a low chair by the bedside, and leaning my head upon the pillow, I determined to keep awake in case Aunt Di should call.

Instead of which, I fell asleep almost immediately. I had quite lost consciousness, when I woke with a start at some noise, real or fancied, that sounded exactly like a knock at the front-door. Sitting up, I listened.

There was no further knock, but it seemed to me that the door opened and that someone came into the hall. What could it mean? What did it mean? The door must have been locked as usual, or ought to have been.

Everyone was in bed. I had been the last up. Tom was gone and the servants were gone; I had stayed after them with Aunt Di. Margaret was out on a visit. It was not possible, I told myself, that anyone had come in.

But now, as I listened, I thought I heard faint, slow footsteps ascending the stairs. Terror seized upon me. My ideas flew to robbers; perhaps naturally enough. Stealing across the carpet to my door, I noiselessly drew it open and peeped out.

My door was nearly at the end of a rather long corridor, close to the large end window, before which the white blind was drawn

against the moonlight. The next door but one to mine was Aunt Dinah's ; opposite was Tom's ; and at the other end was the staircase. The gas-jet had not been put out, on account of Aunt Di's illness, and the corridor was as light as day.

I could see nothing unusual. Still, hardly daring to breathe, I thought I heard those slow, soft steps ascending. But I called to mind what tricks the imagination plays us in the night, especially when rendered anxious by illness in the house, and I told myself I must be mistaken.

Taking courage, I advanced a pace or two. Keeping my eyes strained on the staircase, I saw the intruder come into view. He seemed to bring a deadly cold with him, for a blast as of an approaching iceberg struck upon me. I did not scream. I did not dash into my own room, or into Tom's for protection, for I had instantaneously recognised him, and all other emotion gave place to astonishment.

It was Lionel Payne.

He looked just as he used to look, except for an intense pallor. I had never seen a face so pale before. He wore no hat, and his coat, a dark frock, was buttoned up close to his chin. He advanced slowly and soundlessly along the passage, his right hand held out towards me, his gaze fixed on mine.

I went forward to meet him ; we met close to Aunt Dinah's door. Putting out my hand to his, I found he did not take it ; instead of that, his own dropped. His face looked frightfully white and mournful ; his eyes, fixed on mine, had a startling sadness in them. The cold of the air and the strange gaze set me shivering.

"How did you get in, Lionel?" I asked. "What have you come for, at this hour?"

He made no reply, but passed onwards behind me, and I certainly heard him sigh. A deep, long-drawn sigh, which died away on the air. I turned to look after him, and——could not see him.

Had he gone into my room? There was no other door open : yet he had not had time to reach it. I went to my room, and looked in. But he was not there.

Utterly bewildered, I turned to the corridor again. He was not in it : and the cold blast which had chilled me was not in it either ; the temperature had returned to its previous warmth, that of a summer night.

"Lionel !" I called out. "Mr Payne !"

Tom's door opened then, and Tom stood at it, half dressed.

"What is it, Grace?" he asked. "Is Aunt Di worse?"

"Tom, I want to speak to you—no, no, it's not Aunt Di."

I was beginning to shiver and shake, for a frightful dread had come rushing over me. Crossing over to my brother for protection I told him all.

"Grace, child, you must have dreamt it," he said, soothingly

"Don't, Tom ; don't say that. I was as wide awake from the first as I am now. Do you not see what it must have been?"

"My dear, I only see that your nerves are all abroad. Look at the thing practically: he *could not* have come in. I was late to-night, you know, getting on for eleven, and I locked and bolted the front door myself when I came in."

"It was Lionel, Tom, but not in life," I shivered. "Lionel Payne is dead ; he appeared to me in spirit. He came to let me know it. If it was *not* his apparition, if it was himself, where has he disappeared to?"

"I'll look about a bit," said Tom. "Some thieving fellow may have got in through one of the windows. Prowling about to see what he can pick up!"

"Do you think I could mistake anyone else for him?" I sadly said. "He was not altered at all—except that he looked strangely pale and mournful."

Tom looked about the passage and into the two unused chambers, one of them near the head of the staircase ; then he went below. I went with him, simply because I dared not stay alone. The front door was locked, as he said ; no one could have come in at it ; the windows were all fast. I think Tom felt puzzled.

Aunt Di was coughing when our survey came to an end. I shut myself into her room until the morning.

News, by telegram, reached Pressgate from Sweden that same afternoon. Lionel Payne had met with an accident on the rails the previous evening ; he had died about midnight.

It was about midnight that I saw him. That he had most assuredly appeared to me—come to tell me of it—there could be no manner of doubt. It was his way of showing me that the oath which had bound us together was at an end—as I believe, and always shall believe. Even sceptical Tom came round in a degree to my way of thinking ; he was brought to admit that I must have seen a figure, which was wholly unaccounted for.

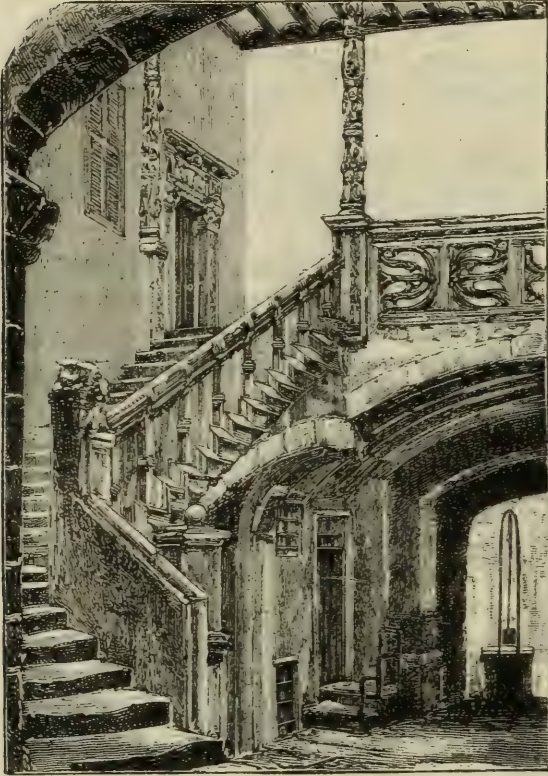
We did not tell Aunt Di, or Margaret when she returned ; we did not make it known to the world ; but we often talked of it with hushed breath between ourselves—Tom and I and David Malcolm. Being of Scotch descent, *he* believed that it might be as I maintained.

Lionel died in June. In September I became David Malcolm's wife. And I wish every girl could find as good a husband and be as happy as I am !

Eva Bellair? She went home to her mother in the West Indies that same year, and by the last mail we received wedding cards. Eva had espoused an old man who had grown rich on a sugar plantation.

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



PALMA.

WRITTEN to a very near friend in England, these letters occasionally contain personal remarks that may seem of little interest to anyone without the "charmed circle;" an inevitable feature in all correspondence not originally intended for publication. Where such passages may occur, it is hoped that the indulgence of the reader will be freely given.

On the other hand, impressions recorded in the present form may, perhaps, prove somewhat more entertaining than the more direct manner of noting incidents of travel.

Be this as it may, it is thought better to issue the following pages almost as

they were first written, rather than, by pruning, deprive them of any little life and virtue they may possess.

For the freer and more intimate tone adopted, every allowance must be made: and if the writer seems for a moment to be "taking the reader into his confidence," he prays for the exercise of that charity which "beareth all things" and "is not easily provoked."

Palma. Nov. 10th, 1886.

MY DEAR E.—At your own request I promised to send you a true and faithful account of my visit to the Balearic Islands, minute in all particulars and details of description. If, therefore, my letters should become to you a weariness to the flesh, blame your own indiscretion, not the shortcomings of my pen. "Ferdinando, Ferdinando, no man

can do more than he can do ! ” I fear that you will sometimes say he might have done a great deal less.

With this gentle warning, I dismiss all further apology, and begin at the beginning.

This beginning, as you know, was the 9.40 train from Charing Cross for Folkestone and Boulogne. How many times have I not travelled that route, under all sorts and conditions of weather, bound for some fair spot in La belle France, which to you and to me happens to possess the additional charm and association of home and birthland ! Every step of the way is full of happy recollections in the past, and, I hope, of experiences in the future.

That 9.40 train was, to some extent, a leap in the dark. You are aware how impossible it seemed to find out anything in London about the Balearic Islands, either as to their more prominent features or the best way of getting to them. One knew of boats running from Barcelona and Valencia, but how often, and on what days, could not be discovered. Even at the office of Messrs. Cook and Co., those great Purveyors of the Picturesque to the Public, no information was forthcoming. They did all in their power ; were, as usual, polite and painstaking ; hunted up books and time tables ; yet without result. One clerk, indeed, suggested that the P. and O. boats ran regularly to Gibraltar, making it somewhat hard work to keep up a becoming dignity. The visit ended in nothing more than a suggestion that I should telegraph to the British Consul at Barcelona, asking him as a favour to telegraph back the days of departure for Palma. This was done, and the reply carefully franked. None was forthcoming. Like Poe's raven,

“ Not the least obeisance made he,
Not a moment stopped or stayed he.”

I confess that I was surprised, though I thought it probable that the explanation lay with the telegraph officials. So it proved : for on calling on Mr. Wooldridge at Barcelona, who received me with every courtesy, he said that he had duly telegraphed the information—and this, owing to carelessness in Spain or England, I had not received.

Thus, having done my best and failed, there was nothing for it but to take this first step in the dark, and trust to chance. The event proved that we could not have acted more apropos. H. C. was my travelling companion, and revelled in the idea of crossing the Channel, that mauvais quart d'heure to the larger portion of mankind. I see you smiling, but assure you that I mean nothing personal.

At Folkestone he thought the sea looking deliciously calm. I knew better, but it is wiser to let people find out things for themselves. Even in the harbour, we found no very steady foothold. Once outside, the sea was disagreeable and choppy—one of the unpleasantest motions I ever remember. It was bitterly cold,

and a strong north-easter was blowing. The sea broke over the vessel and drenched the decks. Even the bridge did not escape. There H. C. took up his station, and presently succumbed. The waves were cruel to him in a twofold sense. Before long, he had not only discovered that he was mortal, and that the Joys of Fulfilment are very different from the Pleasures of Hope, but to add to his cup of misery, he was soon wet through and through. He pretended to think it delightful, and I affected to believe him. We must occasionally sacrifice to courtesy.

For my own part, waves may beat and winds blow ; it is all one ; cold, and cold only, finds out the weak joints in my armour. I took refuge in the depths of the lowest cabin, and never moved until safe in Boulogne harbour.

The piers stretched on either side like arms of welcome. How many times have they not done so ? How many happy hours have we not spent at the Hôtel des Bains ? The first person to arrest me on landing was the Commissionaire, who made special inquiries after every one, and regretted that I was going straight through to Paris. They are always polite, these people, and would have you believe that your presence makes *la pluie et le beau temps* for them and for the world at large. This is one of those phrases that are not to be translated, and may be allowed to stand in the original.

Twenty minutes were devoted to the buffet, where even H. C. did not waste his time. Nature has great powers of recovery. Old Joseph waited upon us, and regretted the days when "he had the honour of serving Monsieur à l'Hôtel des Bains." To say the truth, I had forgotten his honest old face, and thought of the proverb, "More knows Tom Fool," &c. Joseph, however, was depressed at this want of memory ; it was paying him a bad compliment ; and the *amende honorable* had to be made in more substantial form than a mere compliment, bad or good.

Presently the train moved slowly towards the station through the lines of shipping in port and basin. The scene you know so well was gay and sparkling as ever. Above the quay and the vessels rose the old fishing town, gray, ancient, dilapidated and picturesque as usual. It was here that, a year ago, I found H. minor mobbed by a crowd of boys who had stolen his kite, and whom he was pluckily tackling single-handed. In the upper town, the cathedral towered, or rather *domed*, above the ramparts : thin, consumptive-looking, yet finely placed. Through the sluices the water was rushing seawards, and only those who know Boulogne realise the merits of this systematic outpouring of the flood.

In the carriage we had a curious individual who had been our fellow traveller from London. His conversation was extremely entertaining ; his adventures were marvellous. This singular being was of "such stuff" as few men are made of ; would have posed as an excellent Faust, a Mephistopheles, a leader in Dante's *Inferno* (it

sounds better to call it Dante's); everything and anything in turn. He was an extraordinary mixture of all the learned professions, of active and business life, and of the pleasures of the world. He discoursed eloquently and learnedly about law, physics, music, the best authors of all nations, the best pictures; was equally at home in all: and equally familiar with horse racing.

He once shut himself up for six months in a monastery for the purpose of mastering a language that few care to attempt, and for company had only his piano, horse, dog, and a pet monkey. In short, there was nothing that he had not tried and apparently mastered. He was now on his way to the East, and was taking two hideous dogs with him. At the Paris station we parted, and could not well have done otherwise. We saw life from different points of view. There was a wild recklessness about him that even the soberness for which you know me distinguished would never have counter-balanced. We told him we were going through Spain, and he immediately thought he would come through Spain too; but at this we were seized with deafness, and changed the subject.

There was one trait about him which has always borne for me an indescribable charm, perhaps because my own peculiar temperament makes it so impossible to do likewise, except to the very closest friend. He was singularly frank and open about himself. All the good in him and all the bad came out equally freely; was poured forth like a torrent, without concealment or *arrière pensée*. "*Je suis ce que je suis*." He withheld nothing. Personal idiosyncrasies, family matters, everything was stated with the most amazing candour.

You will say this was eminently indiscreet with a stranger, but in this instance, perhaps, it only proved that he knew how to choose his company. From Charing Cross to Paris I do not think he was silent for two minutes, and you can realise (or perhaps you cannot) the sudden calm that seemed to fall upon us as we left the Gare du Nord for the lively streets of the French capital.

Alas, how its glory falls. Who would know it again for the same town where, within a few years, I have spent so many happy days and months, had so many friends? And amongst all the social *réunions*, none were so pleasant as Mrs. Milner-Gibson's afternoons, whom a great man of his day considered the second most perfect hostess in the world, though it must have been difficult to excel her. It was only last year that we mourned her death. Those evenings, too, with Madame G., the handsomest woman in Paris, the most imposing, yet (rare combination) the most lovable! The glass of time ran in golden sands on those nights when she had not her brilliant receptions, and I was so often privileged to form one of a little intimate *parti carré* with the funny old Comtesse de Merinville, who invariably wore a mantilla, posed as a Spanish beauty (certainly a light of other days) and affected all the languid grace of an Andalusian!

Again, there were evenings with Julia Kavanagh—herself one of

the best and purest writers of her time—when she was wont to charm with the soft beauty of her large brown eyes, at once so full of sweetness and intellect, her fine brow and magnificent hair. How one delighted in her quiet tones, half English, half French, the excellence of her conversation, the depth and beauty of her ideas, her admirable judgment of books and authors.

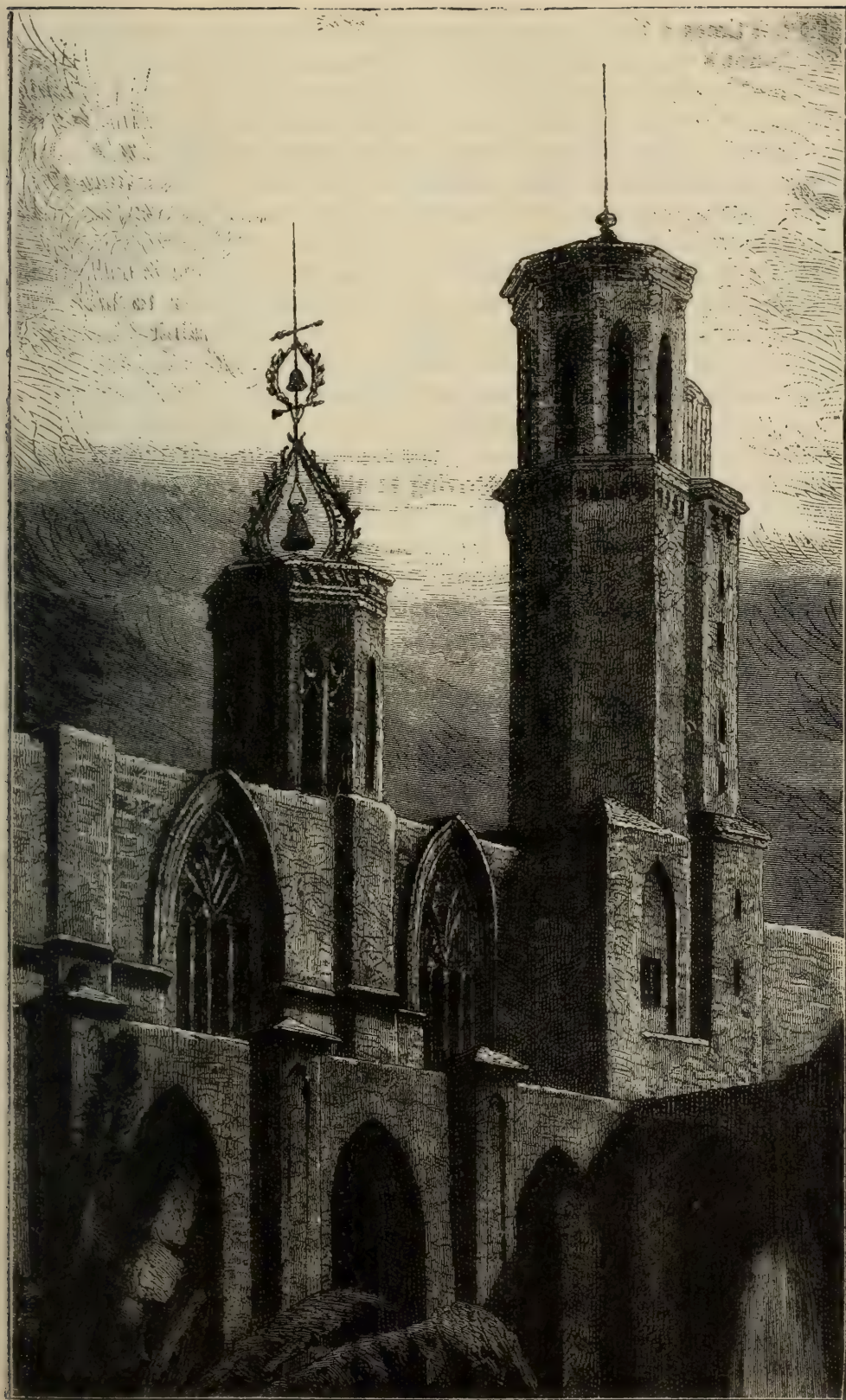
They deserted Paris and went southward to Nice, whence Julia Kavanagh's letters were always distinguished by an undertone of sadness of which the key note was "neuralgia."

Then came the fearfully sudden end; the cutting down of a life before its time; and a mother more than half blind left mourning for one who had been literally the light of her eyes—and for whom she still mourns. In the cemetery outside Nice, overlooking the town and the deep cliffs and the blue waters of the Mediterranean, in sight and sound of the sea she described so well, a large tomb of white marble, that is almost a chapel, marks the last resting-place of Julia Kavanagh. Even her pure and beautiful spirit could have desired and chosen no lovelier spot. Roses bloom there eternally; many of the trees do not shed their leaves; nature seems ever fair and young.

But I am wandering from my subject, as I fear I shall wander only too often in these letters, when I chance upon a topic that brings back scenes I have gone through, and people who have added, or still add, so much to the happiness of life.

In Paris we had decided to stay the night at the Hôtel Continental, though it is not a favourite of mine. But H. C. had never seen it, and large and gorgeous with a certain Eastern magnificence, it is rather typical of the capital. For a longer sojourn, and especially with ladies, the quietness and retirement of the Hôtel Bristol leave far less to be desired. I had written for rooms and we were expected. Table d'hôte had not begun when we arrived, but being a little late in coming down, we were refused admittance, though the room was not three parts full. This, of course, is done to send people into the restaurant, where you dine à la carte. Table d'hôte is seven francs, and is moderately good. Mr. B. dined with us that evening. Thus at the table d'hôte our sum total would have amounted to twenty-one francs, whilst in the restaurant for a more modest repast, the amount was brought up to forty-four francs.

I send you these small details, because everything of a domestic nature bears a charm to the female mind that beings of a sterner mould are unable to realise. Mr. B., whose life is devoted to the poor, happened to catch sight of the bill, and was shocked in thinking what a large number of his flock would have been kept for a week upon such a sum. It was useless to represent to him that the sum was a very modest one compared with scores that would be spent that night in Paris by epicures. He is doing a great and successful work amongst the French poor; never preaches less



BARCELONA.

than ten times a week, sometimes oftener. He realises also the truth of Solomon's wise proverb : " Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days ;" for he tells me that many a time, and years after he has forgotten the incident and the individual, some one comes to him with a blessing and a happy face, and a reformed expression ; some one that, perhaps, he had tried to raise from the lowest depths, and who, weeping, declares that, under Heaven, he was their rescuer and upholder.

H. C. had never seen Paris, and as we were to leave it early the next morning for Bordeaux, we strolled out after dinner to look at some of its finer features by moonlight. It had been raining heavily, and Paris in rainy weather is almost as disagreeable as London. Dark clouds rolled across the sky, throwing deep shadows, now obscuring the moon, now allowing it to shine forth with all the brilliancy of a Paris atmosphere. We sauntered through the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, and on arriving at the other end, the rain was good enough to cease. H. C.'s artistic taste was much exercised by the beauty of the Tour St. Jacques, one of the loveliest Gothic monuments in existence. In the strong moonlight it looked wonderfully refined, and we were able to trace much of the ornamentation even of its upper portion.

Beyond this we came upon the new Hôtel de Ville. Whatever may have been the lost building, destroyed by those terrible Goths and Vandals, the modern one is undoubtedly very imposing. It looked so at least to-night, lighted up by a mixture of gas and electric jets, and the silvery moon sailing in the deep blue sky.

Then we crossed over to Nôtre Dame, and here gazed in silence, that highest form of homage and admiration. We had nothing but moonlight to help us, but all the details stood out distinctly, bringing up the wonderful west front, the delicate flying buttresses of the east end, the great rose windows, with a clearness you would have supposed impossible. Anything more refined and beautiful could not be imagined ; and one thought of Ruskin, who raves about it, and of Victor Hugo who made so much of it, and above all of the brain that designed it and the hands that raised it to perfection.

Beside it flowed the dark Seine, its impenetrable waters gloomy and mysterious under the night sky. With this, thoughts and associations were more melancholy. Not far off was that terrible Morgue ; and all the unhappy victims of the river that have been carried there would unfold a tale of horror greater than the world could hold.

Whilst looking over into the cold flowing waters we were suddenly accosted by a madman, who danced before us in a sort of fine phrenzy, and shouted as we moved away rather abruptly, lest the desire should seize him to hurl us over the parapet. H. C., strong and muscular, might have grappled with such a foe, but my frail tenement would have as much chance in the grasp of insanity as a pigmy in the hands of a giant.

Fortunately the trial did not take place. We went our way, the madman went his ; or rather we left him on the bridge. It was the Pont St. Michel which I have crossed scores of times on my way to the Quartier Latin, to take part in scenes I can contemplate without any terrible self-accusings, yet in which ladies, nevertheless, had no place. We left the madman, I say, grinning after us like an embodied imp, and showing teeth that to our excited imagination looked like fangs seeking whom they might devour. No doubt he was harmless, and the chances are that he will some day take a leap into the pitiless stream which even then he seemed to be scrutinising with evil intent.

After this we made our way down the banks of the Seine, through the courtyard of the Louvre, back to the hotel, where I was undergoing a small adventure. It was in this wise.

On first arriving, we had left the care of the luggage to the porters of the hotel, but when it was taken up to our rooms a dressing-bag was missing. It appeared to have been overlooked and sent back in the voiture, luckily one belonging specially to the Gare du Nord. The bag also contained important documents not to be replaced, and one felt somewhat anxious. I stirred up the people in the bureau, who are naturally lethargic, and take things with an amazing calmness. They in turn abused the porters, and one of the two special culprits in agony of mind and repentance, went off to the Gare du Nord in a fiacre. He returned with the information that the bag had been found by the inspector and immediately despatched back again to the hotel. Time passed, but no bag appeared, and at half-past nine a second messenger was sent off. He likewise returned about eleven with the information that this particular bag had been confounded with another bag, that it was now at the station in possession of the Commissaire de Police, and could not and would not be delivered before to-morrow morning.

As our train started at 8.45, it was evident that the powers must be moved, a difficult thing to accomplish in France. Though nearly midnight, I went off to the Gare, found the Commissaire on the very point of leaving, praised his discretion, admired his organising faculties, and, in short, managed so well as to retire in possession of my property—and of the heart of Monsieur le Commissaire.

Then it turned out that I, and I alone, had been the culprit. Carrying my own bag by way of additional caution, on coming out of the station I had placed it for a moment on one of the benches, whilst a porter went off in search of our special carriage. Up came our late fellow traveller, his two dogs pulling two ways and he pulling a third. He at once started a lively conversation, and when the carriage was found, the bag was forgotten. There it was discovered by a porter when the crowd had cleared away and the station was deserted, and taken to the office of the Commissaire de Police.

But what about the unhappy hotel porters, who, for four hours,

abused by the bureau, had been trembling in their shoes, wondering how it would all end for them? Two had been held responsible, and the only thing to be done was to award them substantial damages without the intervention of the Court. This was not a difficult matter, and I am persuaded that they have ever since been on the look out for a similar adventure.

The next morning we left for Bordeaux, crossing the Seine and passing down by the Jardin des Plantes on the way to the Gare d'Orléans. We caught a passing view of Nôtre Dame, but beautiful as it was, the sentiment and poetry of last night's moonlight was now missing. We were also a little anxious about our train, which we caught only just in time.

There were two people in our carriage, evidently husband and wife, curious specimens of the sunny south: dark, swarthy, clumsy members of society, who spoke with a strong Provençal accent. When the guard came up and asked Monsieur where he was bound for, he replied, in a rich, rolling guttural: "Bourdeaux," pronouncing it as it was anciently spelt, and may still be found. About eleven o'clock this interesting couple spread out a sumptuous repast, including two bottles of wine and a *dessert*. This occupied them for half an hour, when the gentleman rolled himself up like a marmoset and went to sleep, and Madame, removing her gloves, contemplated her jewelled hands and fell into deep thought.

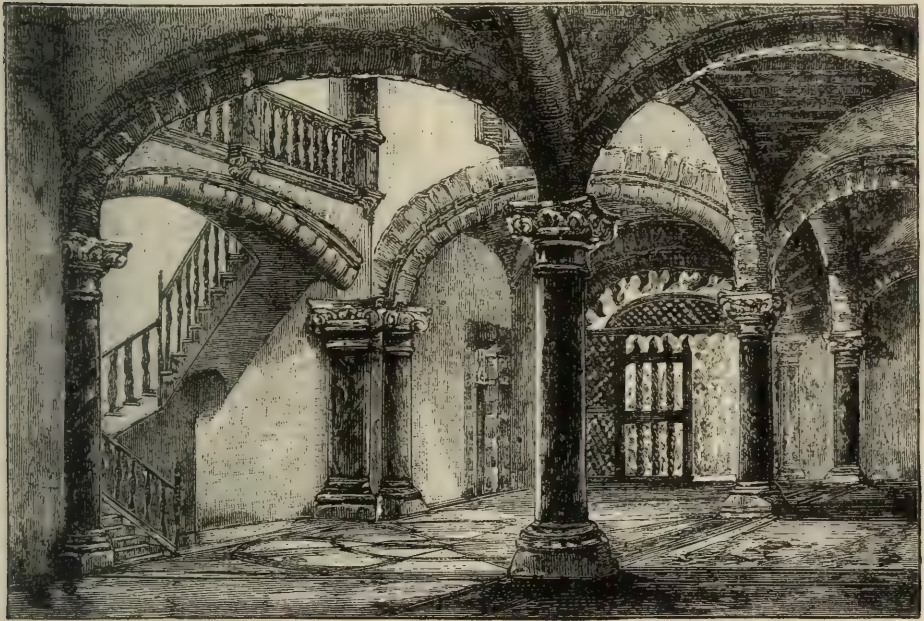
It was a very interesting journey, and one that I think you do not chance to have taken. We passed many well-known towns and many churches and cathedrals conspicuous for their fine architecture and magnificent sites. At Orléans we stayed twenty-five minutes for déjeuner, and fell to musing upon Joan of Arc and Agnes Sorel. Tours, where the purest French is spoken, looked calm and white and pastoral. Its fine cathedral rose above the town, which spreads far and wide, many red-roofed houses standing out in vivid contrast with the green fields and long, straight avenues of the plain. Flowing through it was the beautiful Loire, adding poetry and motion to the scene. About Poitiers the terraced rocks were magnificent, and the situation of the place was wonderfully romantic and picturesque. The broad river still ran its course, above which the rocks rose in singular flutings, bare and rugged, like castled ruins of a far gone age. Vivonne, with its lovely old church, surrounded by quaint village houses, was sleeping in its sunny plain; and St. Benoît, with its sluices and river and wooded slopes, looked like a dream as we flew past it.

We were soon in the heart of the wine district. Mile after mile of vineyard stretched before us. But the fruit had all been gathered, and the bare vines looked anything but luxuriant and romantic, anything but emblematical of the sunny south.

Nor were we as yet in warm climes. A cold wind blew in upon us, which caused Madame to put up the collar of her jacket and twist a fur round her neck, and look reproachfully at us; and

Monsieur shivered in his sleep and dreamed of arctic regions, and sneezed seven successive times without waking. But what would you? We had closed the window to within a couple of inches, and even this at great sacrifice. You know these people of the sunny south, and how the scent of garlic inevitably accompanies them as perfume follows the rose (one likes to go to extremes in comparisons); and our travellers were no exception to this rule, which really seems in these lands to be the one rule without it. So the open window remained open, and presently Madame subsided from the contemplative mood into the oblivious; and the train and the day rolled on to evening.

At a quarter to six we reached Bordeaux. Before the train had



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stopped, Madame screamed out for “un petit omnibus,” and we soon found that she was a cunning traveller. Everyone seemed to ask for “un petit omnibus,” and we who took things more leisurely discovered, when our time came, that all the small omnibuses were engaged, and were driving off one after another like a string of turkeys. There remained nothing but an omnibus that would have held comfortably twenty-four people, with a great mirror at one end drawing them out to forty-eight, and making the lumbering vehicle look really cavernous. Into this we two were politely shown, felt lost, and wondered if we should ever find our way out again.

It rattled off; and you know how French omnibuses *can* rattle, and at what a pace they tear when it suits their purpose to put on steam. To-night we rattled and tore with a vengeance, and all our traps were soon lying like fallen images on the floor, my

precious bag amongst them. It was quite dark, and our first impression of Bordeaux was that of rolling over a fine bridge, and a river of amazing width, and a port apparently of endless resources and anchorage. Church towers and steeples uprose here and there, and an old gateway—La Porte du Palais—called out all H. C.'s enthusiasm, though we could see nothing but outlines exaggerated against the dark night sky. But he was right, for the next day it proved ancient and interesting.

We soon found ourselves at the Hôtel de France, and were not refused admission to the table d'hôte, where, amongst other courses, we were treated to boiled mutton and caper sauce, called in the menu, *Gigot à l'Anglaise*: reminding one of the menu at the Cliftonville Hotel at Margate, where I had recently spent some time. The first day, one of the items was *Curry à l'Indienne*, and we wondered what curry *not* à l'Indienne could be. The second day the self same dish was entered *Karri à la sauce piquante*. Both were simply curried mutton.

The next morning I had one of my headaches, which you know have been my perpetual torment and torture; but which, thanks to Dr. Frazer of Bournemouth, who must be a wizard in his profession, have become very nearly things of the past with me. By ten o'clock it had taken flight, and we went forth to examine Bordeaux by daylight.

We had done so the previous night, and under gaslight it looked an imposing, well built town, with shops that rivalled those of Paris. One jeweller had an especial display of gems, and it took all my powers of persuasion to prevent H. C. from entering and rashly buying a pair of solitaire diamond earrings marked at the modest price of 5,000 francs. I tried my hardest to find out who they were destined for, but the Oracle was discreet and dumb.

By daylight Bordeaux was equally imposing. Nearly all the shops were open until twelve, and then closed, as it was Sunday. The general impression of the town is exceedingly good; but a far inferior town would be made conspicuous and interesting by its noble river and port, and the fine bridges spanning the water. The cathedral has a splendid exterior, but the west façade was never finished; and the detached belfry at the east end, a lovely Gothic tower, is crowned by an ugly gilt image of the Virgin—though the church is dedicated to St. André. This tower once had a spire 100 feet high, but it was destroyed during the Reign of Terror.

If the interior can be considered fine, it consists in being a nave spanned by a single vault of great width, resting on Romanesque arches, with two tiers of Romanesque windows on either side. This single span gives it dignity, and makes it somewhat imposing; but with this exception, the general effect is not by any means striking.

More remarkable in some ways was the church of St. Michel which also has a very fine detached Gothic belfry, but whose exterior

is in all other respects not worthy of comparison with the mother church. It is in the florid 14th and 15th century style. We liked the pointed arches and naves of the interior, and were simply charmed with the magnificent tones of the great organ. Service was going on, and the boys' voices in the distant chancel rose and fell in Gregorian chant. When they ceased the organ swelled out, now softly as a whispered melody, now crashing out in a perfect volume of sound that rolled and reverberated through the aisles and seemed to shake them to their very foundations. I have seldom heard anything finer and more thrilling, and more than ever felt that music is Heaven's divinest gift to man.

Before this, in the morning, we had strolled through the market place, and though it seems rather like descending from the sublime to the ridiculous, I think we enjoyed it as much as anything. Here, far more than in the atmosphere, which to-day was chilly, we realised that we were entering southern latitudes. Though it was Sunday morning, the market was in full activity, the stalls were most picturesque. The women asked a franc, and would probably have taken ten sous, for immense bouquets of roses that almost required a wheelbarrow to convey them home. There were stores of tomatoes at a penny a pound, and baskets of strawberries at a shilling, and luscious green figs that were almost given away, whilst everything else seemed in proportion.

One woman, whether we would or not, thrust upon us six bunches of the largest, sweetest violets you ever saw, and demanded two sous for them. We almost felt that we were robbing her. I tried to get a box to hold a supply that would have adorned and scented your rooms, but twelve had struck, and at the magic sound all shops close, swift as the ghosts that disappear at cockcrow. So you never had your violets; and here in Palma, amidst perpetual sunshine and eternal summer, and much that is lovely and charming, they have yet to be discovered.

We left Bordeaux at 7.15 in the evening, en route for Barcelona, wondering very much what sort of a night journey lay before us. Luckily we had a carriage to ourselves, and the guard, who paid us special attention, marked our compartment with a white cross. For a moment we felt almost under a ban, cut off from mankind like the lazarettos of old tenanted by infected mortals, or the doomed houses that were marked during the raging of the plague. But the white cross in our case was as the swan to Lohengrin; a token that we dwelt in the odour of sanctity and were unapproachable.

Outside, the night was still, chilly and mysterious. No brilliant stars, no silvery moon, but heavy clouds and occasional showers. Towns and churches, when we came to them, threw out dark outlines. Deep silence seemed to reign everywhere except in the stations.

At Narbonne, at one in the morning, human nature imperatively demanded support, and we crossed over to the deserted buffet and surprised the sleepy waiter by an order for coffee and cold chicken. The former he served in glasses like a mazagran, and we took it all standing. The famous Narbonne honey was conspicuous by its absence, and on asking an explanation of the garçon, he gave a reply which might be broadly interpreted by the old and homely saying that no one is so badly shod as the shoemaker's wife. In the hurry of the moment, I left my coffee behind untouched, and still look back with agony of mind upon the forgotten glass. Do you know the sensation that one o'clock in the morning creates on such occasions? How very *mortal* we feel; a state of bondage that nothing relieves like coffee.

On the platform we found a distressed old lady who had been rash enough to descend from her compartment and could not find it again. It is rather a terrible feeling, with the train on the point of starting, and it is often almost impossible to recover your proper place. To begin with, the carriages are quite up in the air, and you have to swing up about six feet from the platform before you can gain a difficult and momentary glimpse of any interior. Then nine times out of ten the blinds are down and the lamps shaded, and you cannot see in at all. This old lady, when the train was in motion, was finally precipitated like a bombshell into the next compartment to ours, containing four smokers, where she must have been as welcome as snow in harvest, and felt herself as much out of place as a swan on land. Not that there was anything swan-like about her, or anything just then very dove-like in the moods of her gallant companions. But the next station restored her to freedom, and no doubt harmony to the invaded.

We reached Cerbère, the frontier town, and were amongst the Pyrenees, with all their beautiful forms and undulations. The comfort of our journey was over. Here we changed carriages, and all luggage was examined. It was three o'clock in the morning, and rain was coming down like waterspouts. This, I assure you, is no exaggeration. I would not for a moment take pattern by H., who writes us word from India that they have blackbeetles as large as kittens, fleas like grasshoppers, and a clap of thunder lasting fifty-nine minutes. We were simply drenched in going from one platform to another, and what made it worse, I had now said with Byron: "My native land, good-night!" to find myself in the midst of an unknown tongue.

Luggage was duly scrutinised, coffee was administered, and not forgotten; we asked by signs and paid by signs, all as intelligible as language, but humiliating. Then we went off to secure seats in, we devoutly hoped, an empty compartment.

The train, however, seemed crowded, and the guard was rude and unamiable. He showed us to a long carriage overflowing with noisy



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Spaniards, all smoking. We protested ; he shrugged his shoulders and departed. We followed ; he glared. We abused him in English ; he returned the compliment in Spanish. Our language was refined and well chosen ; his, we felt convinced by the sound, was extremely improper. The train was about to start ; we would not yield. We pointed to an empty carriage, to which he had refused a dozen passengers admittance, and recklessly declared for that or nothing. It was a case of the stronger will. We conquered, secured a compartment to ourselves, and the remainder of the journey, which would have been most wretched, was passed in comparative comfort.

Day broke, the sun rose, and clouds dispersed. The scenery was already very Spanish in character ; the country fertile and picturesque. Whole districts of olive trees, with their sober green, and curious old trunks clothed plains and hill sides. The cactus abounded, with its prickly fruit, and woe be unto him who plucks it with an ungloved hand. A thousand small darts will pierce him, and they are poisonous. Palm trees spread their feathery crowns, and dates hung below the leaves in rich bronze clusters. Indian corn was ripening on many a flat-roofed tenement. White houses with open upper stories and balconies recalled Eastern visions, and many a town at which we stopped had an Eastern look.

None was more picturesque than Gerona. Its ancient, apparently half-ruined Gothic church, founded by Charlemagne, stood nobly on the brow of the hill, overlooking the town reposing on the slopes. Houses and church looked a thousand years old. A river ran below, and the picturesque wooden balconies no house was without overhung the water and saw themselves repeated in clearest reflections. Brilliant flowers decorated most of the houses : and where are blooms and blossoms more gorgeous than in Spain ?

About half-past-ten our railway journey came to an end. The fine hills and rocks about Barcelona, chocolate and warm and exquisite in tone, opened up ; factories and chimneys outside the town did their best to remind one that this is the Manchester of Spain ; a distant view of the sea, that it is also its Liverpool ; but a Manchester and Liverpool where smoke and fogs are unknown, where sunshine abounds ; and balmy airs rob winter of its sting.

We were to "descend" at the Fonda de las Cuatro Naciones, a magnificent name to which the hotel hardly responds, though it is a good one, and the commissionnaire on the platform at once took us in charge. I do not mean this in the legal sense of the term. To our great comfort, we found that a boat started for Palma that very afternoon. Nothing could have happened better.

The commissionnaire took our luggage in hand, which had to be examined here again. The Spanish seem to delight in this examination, for it takes place ten times where once would suffice. If you go for an hour's drive outside Palma, your vehicle is stopped and searched on returning. It reminds me very much of the French

octrois of our childhood, when our carriage would be so often stopped on returning into the towns, whilst the fierce mien of the uniformed official would strike terror to our young minds lest our chocolates and bonbons should be confiscated.

We were soon packed inside the hotel omnibus, and some of the streets we rattled through were so narrow that we literally sometimes grazed the houses on each side. Barcelona was very Spanish in appearance: a singular remark, you will say, of a Spanish town. Many of the thoroughfares were very picturesque from a certain ancient, dilapidated, poverty-stricken aspect. The wider thoroughfares, like the Rambla, were crowded with hurrying people. It was mid-day, and, one saw at once from the general activity of the place that Barcelona was given up to busy ways, and that grass did not grow in her streets.

The omnibus having swirled round half a dozen times until we were giddy and stupid, finally deposited us at the hotel. The day was very bright, and the streets were hot and blazing. In England you would probably have been glad of some of our superfluous heat, for you were all suffering very much from "indoor" weather, and a series of depressions, of course prophesied from America.

Our stay in Barcelona was a short one, and I shall tell you very little about it. At any time I think two days would be enough to devote to its attractions, though there are some fine excursions to be done in the neighbourhood. We thought it hot and relaxing, and not very healthy, all of which I believe to be a fact. There are many quaint and curious bits about; some good old architecture, but very little to remind you of the rule of the Moor in Spain.

No doubt the glory of Barcelona is its cathedral, with which you would have been wonderfully impressed, as we were. It is Gothic, with a west end that, like that of Bordeaux, has never been finished. The exterior, though possessing some rich ornamentation, is not particularly striking, but the interior at once fills you with a certain solemn awe and admiration. It is cruciform, and divided into three lofty and imposing naves. A dim religious light throws over the whole building a sense of mystery. Massive pillars rise to a great height, but gain a certain grace and lightness from the slender shafts they support. The capitals are richly ornamented, and hold the arches that form the vaulted roof. The whole interior is of splendid proportions, of great height and width. In the obscurity one almost loses the lofty roof, upheld by its chaste and beautiful piers. The octagon at the west end is a dream of loveliness and refinement. To gaze upon it from the far side of the choir, between the fluted pillars; to trace curves and arches and all the wonderful details interlining and dovetailing; to catch it in the light and shade thrown by the white glass and the coloured rays of the stained windows: is to lose oneself in a vision that is almost unearthly. The tone of the interior is marvellous; refined and mellowed and sub-

duced beyond any power of description. Ancient and exquisite windows dye the pillars and the walls and the pavement with rays and colours that might rest on an angel's wing. The obscurity appeals most strongly to the imagination, and rouses the religious fervour of this impressionable people. How different these southern influences from those one encounters under Northern skies! By what widely separate roads these opposite races travel Heavenwards! The effect of the whole is one of the utmost dignity and simplicity, inspiring the most frivolous with a certain religious sentiment. I have seldom been more impressed by any building, and H. C., who is so much at home in all these matters, shared the feeling. It was, singularly enough, first designed by a Majorcan.

The cloisters are worthy of the cathedral. They are small but of exquisite Gothic architecture. An ancient fountain for ever plashes its cool waters in one corner of the court, overshadowed by the pointed arches of a Gothic canopy. Beyond this, in the open space, orange and other trees spread their branches, and fleck the sunny pavement with dancing shadows, and give you upward glimpses of a sky bluer than we dream of in England: a sky that seems merely the slight covering or outer veil of celestial regions. We stayed, wrapped in dreams and visions, until the very last moment of our time, and then made the best of our way to the Majorcan boat.

The magnificent port was crowded with shipping. We had to take a small boat to our little steamer lying in the middle of the harbour. She proved very comfortable as far as cabins and arrangements were concerned, but a terrible roller.

We started at four o'clock, with more people than we had expected. The passage out of the harbour was very grand, toned by a descending sun, a sky red and glowing, and gorgeous clouds that sailed onwards. Windows on shore caught up the red flush. An immense rock, like a second Gibraltar, stood out boldly, and seemed to guard the entrance. Low lying, undulating hills beyond, stretched downwards, veiled in the loveliest purple hues. A cormorant here and there skimmed the wide waste of waters, hieing home on the strong wings of its race.

Once free of the harbour, and out on the broad main, the boat began to show the stuff she was made of. One trembled for what she might do on a rough sea. H. C., with the most innocent air in the world, proposed an early dinner, and afterwards declared his intention of remaining on deck all night. By that time a very unpleasant motion had set up. Many had fallen victims, and H. C. did not escape. I turned in early, and was only disturbed during the night by an occasional sea striking the vessel, and sending a shiver through it that uncomfortably suggested a possible dissolution of the craft. H. C. braved the deck until midnight, then wisely changed his mind, and turned in also.

About six o'clock the next morning, we came up with the long,

low, picturesque shores of Majorca. The approach to the port was very fine. The town was backed by splendid hills, some flowing and undulating, others sharp in outline. On a lower range reposed a dignified castle, and below this, on green slopes, a cluster of houses that looked dazzlingly white in the morning sunshine. Here people take refuge during the summer.

We rounded the point, and steamed upwards into the harbour. The cathedral, almost overlooking the sea, stood out boldly—a very remarkable object. A first view of Palma gave one a decidedly Eastern impression. White houses with flat roofs, many of them crowned by great cages for pigeons, stretched far and near. A Gothic, castellated building on the port almost rivalled the cathedral in interest. This proved to be the ancient Exchange, long since fallen into disuse. It was a most picturesque scene; bright, sunny, full of charm, and apparently full of promise. The harbour was crowded with shipping; the quays were full of liveliness and work. Wonderfully bright and blue was the sky, rivalling the blue waters of the Mediterranean, over which we were gliding. Before long, the steamer was at anchor, and we set foot in Palma.

But my letter has drawn out to impossible length, and I must end for to-night. I will only add that of the enclosed sketches, one is a slight drawing of a bit of Barcelona Cathedral, which does it infinite injustice. The other three are H. C.'s, whose fine touch and splendid talent I greatly envy. Two of them are views of wonderfully picturesque courts with which Palma simply abounds; the other is a view of a street, and will give you some idea of the richness of detail of some of these singular and romantic thoroughfares.

They have a curious custom all over Majorca. A watchman patrols the town through the night, crying out, in tones that would drive a melancholy man mad, and a merry one gloomy: "Thanks be to God, the town is in peace, and the night is fine:" varied by: "It is half past one in the morning and the night is serene," or words to that effect. Amongst the people he is known as *Il Sereno*; a very pretty title; because in this favoured clime he has more often than not to proclaim the night *serene*. He perambulates with a lantern, like another Diogenes. In spite of his melancholy tones, one likes to listen to him. It is the old custom, slightly varied, of "Watchman, what of the night?" As I write, I hear him, and he reminds me that it is—not late, but early. So I will end by wafting you a far off benediction.—May all good angels have you in their holy keeping!

A RENUNCIATION.

TURN from me thy sweet face !
 Give thou its radiance to some other one
 To whom thou shalt be as the gleam of day,
 Or as the healing glory of the sun,
 To scatter all the gloom of night away !
 Turn those dear eyes of mercy far from me,
 For all unworthy is my soul of thee !
 Turn from me thy sweet face !

Nay, hush thy pleading voice !
 It smites my stricken soul, as if from Heaven
 There fell the music of the cherubim
 Upon some lonely one, from whom is riven
 The hope of ever joining in that hymn
 Whose melody no touch of sorrow knows,
 But sweetens all the spheres through which it flows !
 Oh, hush thy pleading voice !

Thy garments all are white !
 Ere yet we part may I but kiss the hem,
 And, looking yet again on thy sweet face,
 Pray that the virtue that shall heal from them
 May flow, to give my darkened life a grace ;
 So that if e'er I to thy glory come,
 I may not stand by thee in sorrow dumb !
 Thy garments all are white !

May I but kiss thy feet
 Ere yet we enter on our ways apart ?
 The one to lead me to the falling night,
 Where thy pure tears shall never touch my heart :
 The other guiding thy sure steps to light !
 I dare not look upon thy shining face,
 But for one solemn, heavenly moment's space,
 Oh, let me kiss thy feet !

Stay, do I feel thy kiss
 Upon my neck, as low I lie in dust ?
 And has that wondrous love of thine stepped down
 From its high eminence, to give the trust
 That yet may add new lustre to thy crown ?
 And shall our feet, with thy great love new shod,
 Walk yet together on our way to God,
 Through thy forgiving kiss ?

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

THE ROBBERS' CAVE.

BY ANNE BEALE.

IF Wales is a country rich in stories of ghosts, fairies, and “Romantic weddings,” it is also not deficient in tales of wreckers, robbers, smugglers, and similar disturbers of the public peace. Amongst others committed to our keeping by the departed friend who implicitly believed in them all, is one dating back to the time of Queen Elizabeth, which tells of a band of robbers that infested the woods and the rock-bound coast round about the part where her own haunted mansion lay.

The scene was a grand and castellated residence, with its chapel, situated at the top of a valley two miles in length, which sloped gradually and reposefully to the wild, restless sea. It was met by two small but dangerous bays that lay between jutting rocks, and into which the tides rushed, and from which they receded so rapidly and fiercely that the peasantry were wont to call the projecting rocks “The opening and closing of the Points.”

Although six miles of smooth sand lay on either side of these bays, the treacherous sea gave small time to the wanderer to pass the Points when it had receded from them, but was ready to engulf him if he was not alive to the seasons, at which he could hurry past them with safety. Moreover, there were quicksands hard by, even more pitiless than the sea itself.

These quicksands were at the base of one of two mountains which rose on either side of the valley, and looked down protectingly on the mansion, which seemed, indeed, but a pigmy between them. At the distance of about half a mile from this mansion was an immense inland cave, which, in the Middle Ages, was taken possession of by a band of robbers. Unlike the renowned Robin Hood, they had not even a robber's conscience, but oppressed the weak as well as the strong, the poor as well as the rich, and were the terror of that part of South Wales in which their cave was situated.

It was night, or more properly, early morning. In the glen leading from the mansion, neighbour of the cave, a figure was seen hurrying down the greensward. Was it a ghost? It might be, for it looked all white beneath the fitful moon. But if a ghost, why pause and glance round, then hurry on again? It stayed its steps before one of the haunted towers, as if about to enter; but the gate was barred, and it hurried on. It was no ghost, but a woman, who carried something huddled up in her arms, and who must have left her bed to flee in haste, since she was clad only in her night-gear, with some sort of loose robe thrown over it. Her feet were bare, her hair

floated about her, and she seemed in some awful strait. She shook the gate of the second tower, but that, too, was shut—barred against the robbers.

On she sped till she reached the haunted field. She shrieked with terror, expecting to be assailed by all sorts of invisible enemies. But there was not even a jack-o'-lantern to mislead her; so she rushed through it till she found herself close upon the shore.

She paused and muttered in breathless excitement, "Thank God, it is out! The Points are unclosed."

She meant the tide and the two projecting rocks. She was on the sands quick as an arrow from a bow. They were smooth yellow sands; so, happily, the bare feet did not suffer. Could she get past the Points before the yawning, greedy sea rushed into the bay? The tide was creeping up like some beast of prey in ambush, and might in a moment leap forward with a bound, and seize on her and her burden. She gazed on it, hesitated, and rushed on. She rounded one of the points, and suddenly the roar of the wild monster increased in volume, and she stood a second, paralyzed with terror. Only a second, for she darted onwards to the other Point, and reached it just as the insatiable tide leapt in fury into the bay. She escaped its jaws as if by a miracle, and ran up the beach, pursued by the angry waters.

Out of their reach at last, she sat down on a big boulder. The moon shone out and revealed a face pale as its own.

"They will see me!" she cried, glancing within the loose cloak, and hastening on again. "Better the tide! better the tide!" she added, as she looked at the rolling ocean.

It was rolling ominously towards her, when, with a bound, she leapt from a heap of pebbles at the top of the beach into a green dell, similar to the valley of spirits she had left behind, but smaller. Her poor feet were bleeding now, and her strength was well nigh spent. She had traversed three or four miles of greensward and sand, and her breath came heavily, her footsteps lagged. With a supernatural effort, however, she ran up the dell, glancing behind her as if pursued. Turning off to the right, she followed a path among the rocks, heedless of the stones and brushwood that pierced her feet and tore her garments.

"At last, thank God!" she cried, as the moon suddenly veiled her face, and she sank down exhausted. "Help! help!" she shrieked, and with her call mingled the shrill cry of an infant.

"Who's there?" echoed through the darkness, followed by a gleam of light that seemed supernatural. The lusty baby-cry was the only answer. Nevertheless it attracted the ignis fatuus of a light, which vanished from above and reappeared below. Again the moon shone out and revealed a scene as picturesque as it was startling. The woman lay, seemingly dead, beneath the porch of a small dwelling, at which suddenly appeared the figures of a man and woman.

Within a stone's throw of this abode was a church with ivy-mantled tower ; and church and house were surrounded by an amphitheatre of hills. The figures that bent over the prostrate woman looked almost as ghostly as she did, and were as lightly clad. But they proved themselves of flesh and blood ; for they dragged her into the house. So doing the burden fell from beneath the cloak. It proved to be an infant, and the lusty cry was renewed.

Woman and child were soon within a small parlour, and the pair who brought them there looked for a moment aghast at one another. They were, as transpired immediately, master and servant.

"Sure, sir, it's Mrs. Lewis, head nurse at the Plâs !" exclaimed the maid.

"Take the babe, Betto, while I carry her up to my bed, that's warm, for haven't I just left it ?" replied the master.

No sooner said than done.

"Hide us ! Save us ! They have murdered them all," cried our wanderer, awakening from her swoon. "Where's my baby ? Have they killed him too ?"

The lusty cry reassured her, and she opened her arms.

"He's well enough, Mrs. Lewis, fach," said Betto, placing him within them.

"Betto ! Parson ! they've murdered them all," said the nurse, glancing round with a bewildered stare.

"They ? Who ?" asked the Parson, for it was the Reverend David Saunders, of Llanwerne.

"The robbers. I saw them with their swords in the mistress's room, and heard the children cry for mercy, and then I took up this precious babe and ran for my life. You must hide us, for they'll be after us as soon as they find we've escaped."

"Feed them ; clothe them, Betto, while I dress myself. Put the infant to bed, and then bring Mistress Lewis down to the sitting-room. No more sleep to-night," said his reverence, leaving his room to the women.

Shortly afterwards he was kindling a fire in his tiny parlour, and muttering short prayers and ejaculations as he did so. "The country will be depopulated—Lord have mercy upon us ! If the woman's tale be true, it is a case like that of Joash, saved by Jehosheba from that robber-woman Athaliah. The father so lately dead—To slay the widow and children—Impossible ! Even bold marauders should have hearts. The Lord preserve us."

The nurse appeared attired in Betto's sunday linsey. She had left the babe asleep. She gave a coherent account of what had happened, which the parson heard with uplifted hands. The robbers had broken into the mansion, and murdered, she believed, every soul within it, except herself and the babe.

"Where's the Captain ?" asked Mr. Saunders, in a low, warning voice.

"Nobody knows," replied the nurse; "but he's the next o' kin, and they do say he fears neither God nor man. I believe he's leagued with the robbers."

The Captain was the brother of the late owner of Plâs Werne, and would inherit the property under the present sad circumstances.

"Neither he nor the robbers must know that you have escaped with the infant, or you'll be murdered too," said the Parson. "Where can you hide? I have it. In the church tower."

"It's haunted," shrieked the nurse.

"So much the better. Nobody will molest you. That room was built, so they say, to hold a hundred men or more from their enemies, and should serve to hide a woman and a babe. They'll take you for the ghost, and not a soul will go nearer the tower than the chancel. But you must stay here while I see what's to be done. Betto! Betto! Take care of Dinah Lewis and the babe."

"They'd better be hiding in bed than up, master," answered Betto, reappearing.

The Reverend David Saunders went out, leaving the woman quailing with fright, but this time it was rather of ghosts than robbers. He found the moon gone off on her rounds, and the sun about to take her place. A crimson glow was colouring the watery mountain mists, and streaks of dawn were laying their light fingers on the hill-tops. He hastened through his garden and across a green lane to his church, and stood a moment contemplating it. He knew that neither robber nor Lord of the Manor suspected the room in the tower, and even if they did, they could scarcely approach it, since it could only be entered on hands and knees. Fortunately his small parish of half a dozen collected and as many scattered houses, was at a distance; and save on Sunday his flock rather avoided than frequented the neighbourhood of the church. He was aware that they affirmed to have seen wonderful sights in the churchyard, and he knew that it was useless to combat their superstition; so he contented himself with writing a book on the antiquity of the sacred edifice, which he proved to have been built long before the time of Julius Cæsar. Moreover, he was proud to tell how the old cross in the graveyard had been used for nailing up wolves' heads; for each of which the fortunate slayer had been duly paid after morning service. Indeed, he would fain have declared the church pre-Adamite, like the cave, if he could; but the deluge and other unforeseen circumstances came in his way.

Church, tower, cross and mouldering monuments looked spectral enough for anything, in the misty, purply dawn, and nobody but the Parson would have ventured to unlock the heavy door and enter at that ghostly hour. At no hour would the boldest of his people have climbed the tower staircase, as he did, in the dark, and fumbled about on its crumbling summit till he found some sort of hole, into which he crawled. He usually brought a lantern with him when he

mounted to this his observatory, as he called it, but on the present occasion he had been oblivious of all but the refugees.

However, he got safely into a spacious room, lighted by a good-sized tower-window, and stood in the centre, looking about him. "If hundreds of fugitives have taken refuge here, why not a woman and a babe?" he thought, as the rosy dawn looked in through the arched window, and lighted up a trestle-bed, a chair or two, and a table. "They will be safe nowhere else till we get them beyond seas. The robbers are ubiquitous." He looked out of the window on a glorious prospect of mountain-tops now clearing from mists, and a sky all crimson, purple and golden. "What could anyone want more? It is summer, fortunately, and I can feed them. They shall lack nothing. Old Jonas, sexton, and Joshua, clerk, will say there is another ghost if they hear the infant."

All that day there was such a coming and going at the little parsonage that all that was thought of was how to conceal the poor little heir of Plâs Werne. The countryside was all astir, and little work was done that day. The peasantry spoke with bated breath, and the Parson had as much as he could do to listen. Everybody was in terror of his life, and no one was powerful enough to make head against the freebooters. Indeed, no one ever came across them. At Plâs Werne, on the previous evening, there had been only women and children, for Ap Madoc was dead, and his widow and family lived there, with their servants; and where, it was asked, were the men? In league with the robbers, it was suggested, since only one grey-headed old butler was found among the murdered. The house had been rifled, and there was no one left to say how it had happened. Of all the crimes committed by the outlaws, this was the most glaring; and rich and poor were roused—for whose turn might it not be next? Swords and knives were sharpened, guns loaded, and a great show of valour made: but what did the robbers care? They were secure in their numbers and their cave, and defied law and authority.

Our Parson was determined to outwit them. That night, lantern in hand, he carried bedding and clothes to the church, aided by Betto, and dragged it, piecemeal, to the tower. But he had an awful fright. As he was about to re-enter the parsonage, he saw a man not far off, watching him. He was ready-witted, and went up to him.

"There you are, Jonas," he said. "You promised to come and help me face the ghost, and now I have seen it all alone. Not Jonas after all! Good-night, friend."

The watcher might have been the ghost, for he glided off among the mountains. Anyhow he did not know of the secret of the tower chamber, and the Parson thought that the sooner he got his guests into it the better.

This was, indeed, no easy matter. Dinah Lewis declared she would rather be murdered a hundred times over than sleep in that haunted tower, and Mr. Saunders was compelled to assure her that

both she and the child would be murdered, if they remained where they were. How he got them into it, he never knew, but attributed it to a direct interposition of Providence. First he helped Dinah up the tower stairs, more dead than alive, and shoved her through the aperture ; then he passed in the infant, and finally entered himself. Ostensibly the sort of half-arched doorway was intended to admit light to the staircase, and was so low that only one person could pass through at a time, and that on hands and knees. As a place of refuge, those within would have been at a great advantage, and might have held their garrison against an army of invaders, thrusting them back down the steps up which they came, till the tower had been heaped with the slain. Tales were told that as many as three hundred fugitives had been together in that secretive apartment : there was, therefore, ample room for the trio who now occupied it.

"You are safe here, Mistress Dinah," said the Parson, as he unveiled his lantern. "Be assured that ghosts don't like mounting such a flight of steps, and you and Master Ap Madoc will have it all to yourselves. I will wait upon you, and if you're afraid o' nights, I'll keep guard in yonder corner."

He had managed, during the day, to bring every article necessary for comfort and food up to the room, and knew that his visits would neither be observed nor interfered with.

"For God's sake, don't go, sir," supplicated Dinah ; so he lay down on a rug in the distant corner, and was soon fast asleep. The nurse, reassured by his presence, also lay down on the trestle-bed ; and, wearied as she was by the past day and night, followed his example, while the infant slumbered in her arms.

While they thus "slept the sleep of the just," there was high revelry in the Robbers' Cave some five miles off. The freebooters were feasting on the spoils of Plâs Werne, and with them was Captain Ap Madoc, brother of the late lord of the mansion, and now its presumed owner. The country imagined him abroad, while he was in league with demons in human form at home. Wine flowed, and they toasted him as Lord of the Manor, and forgot their crimes in revelry and debauchery. Amongst them were men once reputed gentlemen, who, like himself, had "spent their substance in riotous living," but unlike him, were not about to become masters of ancestral houses. They boasted of the terror they inspired, and recounted their exploits as if they had been doughty deeds of chivalry.

"I misdoubt David Saunders, of Llanwerne," said one. "He prowls about at night."

"Let's have his head," quoth guilty Ap Madoc, draining a glass lately full of his brother's wine.

"I saw him but yesterday, alone in the dark, between his house, and the church," said the first speaker. "He is fearless, and would sell us all to the devil if he had the chance."

"Ha, ha ! let's sell him first," laughed Ap Madoc.

The cave was enormous—one of nature's freaks when she heaped mountain on mountain in one of her convulsive throes, and left an arch in their midst. Like the tower, the entrance to it was narrow, though men could walk in and out erect. The inmates were numerous, and all were armed. They were fierce, ill-looking men, to whom robbery and murder were common as their daily bread. No wonder the peaceable inhabitants of the mountainous district, of which the cave seemed the formidable centre, both woke and slept in terror of their lives. To approach the cave, hidden and guarded as it was, was impossible; to eradicate the robbers seemed utterly impracticable. Anyone who saw them in their cave, with their fierce, sullen, diabolical faces, would have endorsed this. But their last awful deed had surpassed its predecessors, and Ap Madoc trembled lest he should be implicated. He was in their power, and he felt that they would as soon murder him as not.

"Are you sure they are all gone?" he asked, somewhat uneasily.

"All! All! Another toast to the heir!" was the reply.

And so the robbers and their guest spent the night in revelry which the infant and his guardian passed in the tower-chamber.

More than this, Ap Madoc took possession of Plâs Werne, while the murderers continued their maraudings, and the lawful heir lay perdu, unconscious of his rights.

Meanwhile, the Reverend David Saunders plotted and planned. Nightly did he or Betto personate the ghost, while the one not so employed, mounted the tower stairs with food for the poor prisoners. Mistress Dinah languished, the babe throve, and nobody guessed what was passing in the old church tower. But everybody wondered at the unusual activity of the Parson. All day long he was absent from his parish, riding hither and thither, but none knew whither. He was away from early morn till nightfall, and Betto declared herself as lonesome as Dinah.

"I shall not be back to-night, Betto. You must be both porter and ghost," said his reverence, one morning early, as he mounted his horse. "Keep you the white garments on when you carry up the necessaries, and you will be as safe as if you had a regiment of dragoons to guard you. Maybe you will before long."

"Are you thinking I'm made of iron, Master?" asked Betto, trembling at the prospect before her.

"Do the right, and put your faith in God," returned his reverence, riding off.

It must be confessed that Betto, strong-minded as she certainly was, did not like being left alone at night. But she put a brave face upon it, wrapped her sheet carefully about her, and took a jug of hot milk and other food across to the church. The night was cloudy the aisles looked gruesome, and the lantern she had suspended from her neck, threw but a sepulchral light on the scene. Still she

mounted the tower steps, reached the narrow landing, and thrust her victuals through the wall.

"Come you in, for pity's sake. 'T is terrible lonesome," said Dinah from within; and the child began to cry.

Truth to tell, Betto felt lonesome too, so she crept into the room. A weird, shadowy, strange place it seemed to her; for she had never ventured in before.

Mistress Dinah shrieked at the sight of her in her white garments; and it was some time before she could be convinced that she was not her very own ghost.

"I am myself, and not my ghost," she said, partially throwing off her concealing sheet.

While she remained in the tower there were singular goings on at the Vicarage. The robbers had laid their plans for that particular night, and had come to have the Reverend David Saunders's life. A goodly number of them wound through the mountains stealthily, and surrounded his house. Some went in while others mounted guard. The door was unlocked, so there was no difficulty. They went from room to room, examined beds and cupboards, but found no one. "He must have had scent of it; he finds out everything; maybe he is hiding in the church," they said. The whisper went round, and the guard circled the church, instead of the Vicarage. Their forms looked ghostly enough as they wandered round about, and the mountains looked down upon them, like giants upon pigmies. About half a dozen passed through the churchyard to the church. They found the door open, and went in. They were struck with a sort of awe at the dim pillars and arches, and were about to retreat, when they were paralysed at sight of a ghost. It came from the belfry, glided down a side aisle, and passed through the open door. The ghost was Betto. No sooner was she in the churchyard than she saw figures on all sides.

"The robbers, as sure as I'm alive. I'll scare 'em for once," she thought to herself.

Accordingly, she moved slowly through the churchyard, keeping at a respectful distance from her enemies as she did so, and had the satisfaction of seeing them flee from her like a flock of sheep from a wolf. Emboldened by success, she glided through the open gate towards the house, and paused in the middle of the road.

"There's wise, master is!" she reflected. "He do know that there's no such things as ghosts, but do make them of use all the same. There's cowards they are. Afraid of a white sheet, and murdering innocent children."

Shrewd Betto! They feared God in the unseen, but defied Him in the seen. They took to their heels simultaneously, and left her mistress of the field. She was not, however, as bold as she seemed; and when she entered the house and found all there topsy-turvy she bethought her that Dinah and the infant were safer up aloft than she

down below, and actually went back to the church, locked the door, and remounted those weary steps. The women finished the night together.

When the parson returned the following day, he commended Betto, and promised her that she should be rewarded in due time. "But for Providence I should have lost my head," he said; "and but for you my goods and chattels."

He was not quite easy about the said head, and, pending certain negotiations he was making, passed the nights with Mistress Dinah and the babe in the tower. Betto "went along for company," as she expressed it; and the number of the refugees was doubled.

All of a sudden the countryside became alive with excitement and astonishment. Down came the regiment of bold dragoons at which the Parson hinted. It was to stir up magistrates and local magnates—to memorialise the Queen and her Parliament, and to outwit the robbers that he had been absent from his parish so much and so often; but nobody ever knew that he was in the secret of the advent of the military.

If Dinah shook in her shoes up in the tower-chamber, what of the wicked Ap Madoc at Plâs Werne? What of the freebooters? Perhaps the latter felt the most secure, for long success had emboldened them, and they feared neither God nor man. But the dragoons were fierce and resolute as they, and being engaged in a righteous cause, were just as fearless. So was the Reverend David Saunders. He knew the country well, and pioneered the military in somewhat reckless fashion, seeing what depended on his safety of limb and life.

Wild and exciting were the scenes amongst the mountains, and the soldiers declared they were fighting against devils, not men, so miraculous were the appearances and disappearances of the marauders. Indeed they did not originate this idea, for the peasantry believed their lawless deeds to be done by Satanic agency. However, the red-coats harassed them by night and by day, and at last even made their way through rock, brushwood, and all sorts of obstacles, to their redoubted cave. "The prince of the powers of darkness must be in it!" ejaculated the Parson, who was with them in some sort of military disguise; for the cave was empty. "We take possession in the Queen's name," laughed the soldiers, and they were billeted there and round about that night, while his reverence returned to his cure.

And a wild night it proved, for back came the robbers in the dead of it, and those who entered first into their gigantic dwelling were received at the point of the bayonet. Many were massacred before the bulk of the horde knew what was passing. When they found out one of them cried, "Set fire to the cave," but the soldiers were prepared for this emergency. Those that lay in ambush burst out upon the robbers, and a deadly fight ensued. The robbers fought

like demons, but when they found that their enemies had the best of it, they disappeared, leaving their dead behind them.

Disappeared? Where? Nobody knew, but everyone cried: "The Devil is certainly in it."

The following day it was rumoured that Ap Madoc had also disappeared, and that Plâs Werne was shut up.

When the Parson recounted these events to Dinah, she was all for taking possession of the usurped domain.

"We shall die up here in the cold, and be eaten up by the rats," she said, despondingly, for summer had fled, and the best part of autumn had followed her. Winter was striding on apace. From the tower windows nothing but browns and greys could be seen, for the purple heather was withered, and the snow had not yet fallen upon its stalks.

"Anyhow, we will risk it. The soldiers will protect us," said his reverence.

And a few nights after, Dinah and the babe came down from the tower, under cover of Betto's ghostly sheet. The Parson kept watch while they slept, and no one disturbed the peace of the small dwelling. But there were fine doings at dawn the next morning. Between church and Vicarage, there shone a grand display of gold and crimson, and the astonished mountains looked down on a troop of dragoons, while the mists hurried off in affright, as if expecting pursuit. The sun was not so timid, and burst from behind a mountain-top, as if resolved to see what was astir.

Out came the Reverend David Saunders, carrying the heir, who crowed with delight at the helmeted array, and stretched out his arms to the gallant colonel. He had learnt to walk and even talk a little up in yonder tower, and seemed none the worse for his imprisonment.

The colonel took him in his arms, while the Parson mounted his horse, ready at hand, and Betto helped Dinah up behind him.

"A fine child, indeed!" exclaimed the Colonel, as Master Ap Madoc stroked his glittering uniform. "We'll see thee righted, my boy."

The Parson and Dinah trotted off first down the mountain road; the dragoons followed. They passed the scattered cottages that comprised the small parish, and the women at their doors exclaimed at the sight:

"Mistress Dinah, Plâs Werne, and Parson Saunders!"

"And the heir, Madoc Ap Madoc!" supplemented the Parson.

Dinah did not return by the way she had come, but by the high-road, along which the cavalcade trotted briskly. It was still early when they reached the Plâs. They found the lodge deserted, and no one answered to their call for the keeper. Up the long avenue of oaks they rode—a brilliant company. Plâs Werne was shuttered and bolted like its lodge. But Dinah knew of a small side entrance that she thought might yield to slight force, and thither she rode with the

Parson. He dismounted and tried the door, which was on the latch. He went in boldly enough but soon retreated, and signalled to the soldiers.

"It is full of men; some asleep, some half awake," he said. "They did not see me, but I'll warrant they are all robbers."

In a few moments a cordon of soldiers was formed round the house, and the child and Dinah placed in the midst of a second cordon. Men and horses remained still as statues. Not a sound, save the twittering of the birds, disturbed the peace of the scene. Suddenly the juvenile Ap Madoc began to cry, and his cry was even more lusty than when he aroused the inmates of the Vicarage. A shutter was partially unclosed, and a face partly visible.

"It is the captain," muttered the Parson and Dinah simultaneously. "And I'm sure he saw the child and me."

The shutter reclosed instantaneously.

"If they attempt to escape it will be down the glen," whispered the Reverend David Saunders.

His words proved oracular, for in a few minutes a band of armed men poured through a side entrance, and rushed down the terraces that surrounded the house, towards the haunted glen.

"Down the back road and you will meet them at the Towers," said the Parson, pointing.

A guard was told off to protect the child, and the Colonel and the rest rode away.

The robbers, with the wicked Captain Ap Madoc in their midst, tore down the glen, pistol in one hand, sword in the other. When they reached the Towers, they shouted, and out poured more robbers secreted there. The cavalry were behind them, and the fugitives shot at them as they fled towards the shore. Down the glen, through the haunted field they ran like fiends, making for the noted Points. "They are open for us; they will close on the soldiers," shouted Ap Madoc.

But on the beach they were brought to bay. It was a fearful scene. Some were killed, some surrendered, others succeeded in reaching the Points. Among the latter was Ap Madoc. But the tide was coming in rapidly, and those yawning jaws, that spared the infant heir, were greedy to devour the usurper. And they did not spare him or those who rushed to their destruction with him. The sea makes quick work of it when it chooses; and no sooner was Ap Madoc round one Point and making for the other, than "they closed" upon him, as the saying was, and the world was well rid of the murderer and his accomplices.

And so the robbers were rooted out, and the youngest born of the race of Ap Madoc came to his own again.

NERO AS A MUSICIAN.

ON the tower of Mæcenas, when Rome was burning, in the first century of our era, might have been seen a young man, dressed in the costume of a Grecian rhapsodist, reclining on the velvet cushions of a luxurious throne. A garland of olive leaves is round his brow, and he holds a lyre on his knee, as he gazes dreamily on the awful conflagration that rages beneath him. By his side stands a *phonascus*, or "voice-trainer," whose special duty it is to guard the emperor's voice from harm; who sniffs the air to see if a chill is in the sky, and every now and then applies a handkerchief that he holds in his hand to wipe the perspiration from his patron's lips. Not far away, among the attendants at the back, stands the second officer of the royal music, the keeper of the Imperial Lyre, whose task it is to search the marts of Europe and Asia for the best materials for strings, the best wood for frame and sounding-board, and to preserve with the nicest exactitude the royal instrument in tune.

"Terpuus," cries the rhapsodist, turning to the trainer at his side, "is inspiration given by surroundings, or does it come, think you, by chance—sent from Parnassus, whenever the gods have a mind to make men happy? I used to think the latter theory true. But now, nay, for months past, I have altered my belief, and find myself able to conjure up the divine enthusiasm, by wresting circumstances to feed my fancies. Was it for mere caprice that I caused this city to be set ablaze? Nay, do not think so. 'Twas to send surging up in my brain a flood of fine thoughts, which are cheap at the price of twice this devastation. Listen to the song I shall sing you, for I affirm that its sublime inspiration is worth twenty burning Romes."

With that, Nero runs his fingers over his lyre, and bursts into an impassioned rhapsody on the ruin of the city.

When he had ended, and after worlds of compliment from all assembled: "Sire," says his voice-trainer, as if in a very ecstasy of fear, "your voice will suffer if you tax it more. Your assumption of the part of Orestes this morning at the theatre was a great strain upon you, considering the delicate state of your throat at present; and surely you will not, by excess of enthusiasm, impair even in a slight degree that beautiful voice, which all the world delights to hear."

"You are right, Terpuus," replies Nero. "We will give over singing for the afternoon; and but for a brief rehearsal of the part we are to sustain at the banquet this evening, no more will we do for some hours. Let me see; what was the part?—'twas—'twas——"

"Your Majesty has forgotten," replied the trainer. "You yourself

mentioned it a short while ago, but in the inspiration of your rhapsodising it has fled for the moment your memory. This evening the Christians who are charged with setting fire to the city are to be burnt at the banquet in the royal gardens. They are to be bound up in the manner of torches, and set alight—the happy idea of your favourite, Crispinus. You are to play the part of Orpheus in the Infernal regions ; they to represent the lost.”

“It all comes back to me, Terpuus,” cried Nero, abstractedly ; “and the great aria, ‘Give me back my Eurydice.’ Come, let us go into the palace to practise it, that we may make a proper figure at the banquet.”

And the banquet was held in the gardens of Sallust, and all the nobility of Rome were there. And the tables were laid under the trees, and twinkling lamps were hung above the banqueters. And from one end of the gardens came the roar of rare bands of music, while dancing girls, in the lulls between the courses, came dancing down the piles of tables in troupes, wrapped in thin gauze, and clattering their cracking castanets. Many of them were Spanish girls from Gades, in Spain, who danced in line, rising and falling in waves of tremulous motion. And there were also Syrian dancing girls, who had cymbals which they clashed above their heads. And high among the banqueters sat Nero, every now and then applauding the sallies of the dancers. The toasts were ushered in by torrents of rippling flutes ; the flute-players beautiful boys and girls, purchased at high rates in the markets of Gaul and Britain.

And with the clearing of the tables, and the commencement of the second course, which was wine alone, the orgies began in earnest. For now the living torches were lighted, to cast a dreadful glare over the banqueters ; and shrieks of agony began to mingle with the roar of the music and the tempest of the dancers’ feet. These torches that were lighted were human beings, wound up in tar and tow, and blazing in iron cradles like so many beacon fires. The idea was the invention of the Emperor’s favourite, Crispinus. The evening’s entertainment is at its height ; when Nero reels from his throne, and dressed in the garb and character of Orpheus, takes up his position in front of the blazing pyres, to begin his air : “Come, give me back my Eurydice.”

Loud huzzas interrupt his singing. “How capital is the effect,” cries one courtier. “Life-like reality,” exclaims another. And the music of the gardens, accompanying in wild recitative, continues, while the Emperor re-addresses himself to his fearful rôle.

Louder and louder roars the applause, fiercer and fiercer swells the music, fainter and fainter grow the screams—till at last the torches are burnt out, and the moon and the stars shine down through the trees.

Next day is a gala day for the Emperor’s performance at the theatre. Nero’s favourite parts were Orestes, Canace, Œdipus, and

Hercules Furens. As the "mad Hercules" he particularly excelled, and his vein was pre-eminently that of ecstasy and passion. He had made his début as a singer at Naples in the third year of his reign, and from that day forward persevered in his odd and self-imposed vocation with the varying success which attends all masters of the craft. The story of his début reads like romance, yet every word of it is perfect history.

In order to give pomp and circumstance to the occasion, and probably with a view of stimulating public curiosity, he entered Naples, where the event was to take place, dressed as Apollo, playing his lyre, and surrounded by a chorus of singers and instrumentalists, who chanted hymns and triumphal odes as they rode along. Trains of courtiers and attendants followed. There were a thousand carriages in all. The horses and mules were harnessed with silver, and the drivers and muleteers were clad in the costliest cloth from the looms of Canusium.

For nearly a week, day after day, did Nero sustain various characters at the theatre. The opening day was attended with a remarkable circumstance, which many took for an omen of the gods, angry that the monarch of the world should stoop to such unworthy pursuits. For scarcely had he stepped on the stage to commence the introductory scena of the tragedy, than the shock of an earthquake was felt, the benches began to sway about, and the stage to totter almost to falling. Such, however, was the terror in which the Emperor was held that the frightened audience, eager as they were to escape from the building, chose rather to face the raging of nature than Nero's displeasure, and maintained their seats and their attention as best they might during the whole time the earthquake lasted.

As a conscientious singer and a laborious, painstaking artist, this royal virtuoso seems to have been unrivalled. We read that during a "professional engagement" (if such a term is applicable to his case), even should it last for a week or more, he would sing incessantly, sometimes at two or three performances a day, never allowing his voice a moment's rest. He generally took up his lodging within the precincts of the theatre itself, never leaving it except to visit the public baths, hastening back from thence with all speed to the theatre again, and commonly dining in the middle of the orchestra.

Such diligence did he use to improve his voice that it was his constant habit to sit up with his voice-trainer, Terpuus, night after night till the small hours of the morning, practising his arias and roulades for the following day. He slept with plates of lead on his chest, to correct unsteadiness of breathing, and give him the power of sustaining his notes in equal volume. He would also abstain from food for days together, in order to purify his vocal tone, often denying himself fruit and sweet pastry, of which he was enormously fond, because they were held to be prejudicial to singing.

Not only as a vocalist did he aspire to excel, but as an instrumentalist as well, in which department of the art his endeavours were no less unremitting, and his success, perhaps, more certain. He could play the flute with the best virtuosos of his day, and was no mean performer on the trumpet. He was also a skilful lyre-player, and affected particular dexterity on the Assyrian harp, an instrument difficult to learn, and therefore only cultivated by the best masters of stringed instruments.

His ambition to be regarded as the greatest musical celebrity of his age led him to undertake a "starring" tour through all the cities of Greece, in the course of which he sang at the Olympic and Pythian Games in public competition with all comers, and several times received the prize. The Greeks, being more critical or less timid than his Roman subjects, were not so liberal of their applause as Nero could desire, and to correct their omissions in this particular he devised a *claqueur* system, which may well commend itself to aspirants for theatrical honours at the present day.

It was on a gigantic scale. Five thousand *claqueurs* were stationed in various parts of the theatre, and by many rehearsals were rendered proficient by giving three distinct kinds of applause (which were to chime in at certain parts of the libretto previously marked by the Emperor himself). The first order of applause consisted in isolated shouts of "Bravo," as if proceeding from the spontaneous admiration of separate individuals among the audience. The second order was even more artfully contrived, for it consisted in starting applause, and then as suddenly repressing it, then allowing it to break out anew, but again restraining it; for which purpose certain contingents of *claqueurs* were told off, who were called "the cold water men," whose duty it was to hush by hisses and expostulations the incipient clapping and stamping of their fellows.

This device of Nero's must certainly receive the credit of originality, and went further than anything else towards achieving him his theatrical triumphs; for there were few among the audience who suspected the very hisses of partisanship, and often, in anger at the apparition of the latter, they would take up the applause themselves, when it was the cue of the "cold water men" at once to subside.

The third order of plaudit was the vulgar and ordinary one of indiscriminate and loud applause from all the *claqueurs* alike; but this was not so commonly employed as the other two, being too coarse and patent not to arouse suspicion. Such are some of the stories that have come down to us regarding the Emperor Nero, in his singular and little known rôle of player and musician.

Nothing in his life became him like the leaving of it; and had his love of art been mere affectation, it would scarcely have shown in those few terrible moments that precede deliberate death.

He was still singing and acting in the theatres of Greece, when the news reached him of the revolt of the Gallic legions, and of a wide-

spread rebellion in which most of the provincial soldiery were implicated. Reluctantly leaving the Grecian boards, he became an unwilling visitant to Rome, where, instead of putting the city in defence and calling out the levies, he passed his time in examining the construction of some new musical instruments which were submitted to his notice, that were called "Water Organs," and were intended as agreeable additions to the stock orchestra of the royal theatre.

Two or three days wasted in this manner allowed the rebellious forces to approach so near to Rome that all chance of averting destruction seemed well nigh hopeless. Energetic measures even at this pinch might have staved off final ruin, but Nero's projected coup-de-main was of so singular a nature that even his friends could ill contain their ridicule. He gathered together all the singers and dancers from the theatres, had them dressed like Amazons, and placing himself at their head, ordered the city gates to be flung open, for that thus he would go out to meet the foe.

Being with difficulty dissuaded from this mad project, he next declared that he would go to face them by himself, trusting to his beautiful voice and his passion and his tears to work upon their feelings.

Being informed that Vindex, one of the leaders of the rebellion, had criticised his singing, and said that he had a bad voice, he was more angry at this than all the revolt beside, and vowed that here at last was treason. But when the push came, and the armies were close to the city, his friends all deserted him, and Nero was left alone. Only a freedman of his named Phaon, and the boy Sporus, whom he loved, and two slaves, still remained faithful to him; and with these he set off to Phaon's country house, in a storm of thunder and lightning, riding with his face covered with a handkerchief. They passed the camps where the soldiers were cheering for the usurper, and when they at last arrived at Phaon's house, they had to creep through marshes and reeds to get in unobserved.

His clothes were all torn, and his shoes; his body also was torn with brambles; and in this way he was brought into a small chamber underground in Phaon's house. There he made them dig a grave, and Sporus to begin the funeral lament. And Nero looked at the grave, and said, "What an artist dies in me!"

Now, even while he was speaking, the hoofs of his pursuers steeds were heard clattering in the distance, every minute getting louder and louder. And Nero burst into verse of song from a scena in a tragedy:

"The gallop of swift-footed horses strikes on my ear."

And when he had finished singing, he set a dagger to his throat, and so died—the musician to the last—strange compound of art and villainy, such as the world has never seen again!

J. F. ROWBOTHAM.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER I.

JUST IN TIME.

“WHY is he standing there? What can he be going to do?”

The words broke involuntarily from Beatrice Ward's lips when she first caught sight of that solitary figure on the embankment. He stood quite motionless, with folded arms, and eyes looking dreamily across the tranquil meadows, as if he were taking in all the freshness and beauty of the sunrise. There was nothing extraordinary in this quiet survey of the landscape; but he had chosen a terrible spot for a halting-place. A man who simply desired to enjoy the charm of the scenery would hardly have stationed himself in the middle of the line when the down train would be coming along in a few minutes. And yet, although the face was still and pale, it gave no indication of the purpose that was in his mind. It was a young face, worn with many sorrows and stamped with habitual melancholy. But it wore to-day a quiet, musing look that did not betray the faintest sign of his determination to die.

It was too early for people to be walking in the lanes and fields; as yet no smoke had begun to curl upward from the chimneys of the nearest cottages, and Beatrice and the stranger seemed to be all alone in the pleasant summer dawn. Both were on the point of a leave-taking. She was saying a silent farewell to the familiar scenes of her childhood; he was bidding good-bye to a world that had not used him over kindly. Her eyes had been bent upon the grass at her feet, and she had looked up suddenly and seen him standing on the line. And then in an instant the truth had come to her with the swiftness of a lightning flash.

Beatrice Ward was a girl who often doubted herself, and was sometimes diffident when she should have been bold. But to-day she never thought of stifling her instincts.

Just at this spot the fence that parted the field from the embankment had been broken down; and it was the work of a few moments to rush through the long grass, climb the bank, and stand face to face with the man, with her hand upon his arm, and her eyes looking bravely into his.

“Come away,” she said firmly. “Come away! The train will be here in a minute or two. I tell you that you *must* come!”

He glanced at her absently at first, with the air of one who had been disturbed in a day-dream. And then, slowly realising her desire



Nearer and nearer came the terrible thunder ; but she did not loosen her clasp or turn her glance aside.

to save, and seeing what manner of woman it was who sought to come between him and his fate, he met her gaze with a grave smile.

"You mean well," he said in a low musical voice. "Don't think me ungrateful if I tell you to go. As for me, I shall stay where I am."

"You will not stay." Some powerful spirit seemed to have taken possession of Beatrice, forcing her to utter determined words. "Do you know how near the train is? Come quickly!"

Her hands closed round his arm; he felt their grasp tighten convulsively, and a faint colour stole into his wan face. This girl who held him was a lady; those deep blue eyes, shining steadily upon him, were filled with the light of a true soul; but he was resolved that no power on earth should lure him back to life. He had made up his mind to die, and he would not be turned from his purpose by a woman's prayers. Yet he could not free himself roughly from those clinging hands. They were ungloved, for Beatrice had been gathering field-flowers; and as he looked down upon her slim white fingers, certain old memories began to stir in his heart, and all the old pain came back again.

"Don't, child; he said, sadly. "Can't you see that you are spending your little strength in vain? The train *is* near. Let me go!"

"I can hear it." She shuddered, but clung more closely to his arm. "Listen to me—I won't leave you here to die alone. See how young I am; yet I have had bitter sorrows, and I am going out into the world to face my fortune, whatever it may be. I don't care much about living; life isn't over sweet, but I shall try to bear it. Won't you bear with your life just a little longer? Won't you give yourself just one chance more?"

"No," he said, stubbornly. "I've exhausted all my powers of endurance. Let me go, child; you are running a risk in stopping here. Slip down the bank as fast as you can, and forget all about me."

The girl still held him; her face, white and resolute, looked up into his, and he read in it a determination that was equal to his own. Nearer and nearer came the terrible thunder; but she did not loosen her clasp nor turn her glance aside. One hasty look up the line, and he caught a glimpse of white steam between some distant trees; and then with his left hand he strove to tear the clinging hands away.

But he had never realised the strength that comes to a woman in a moment of desperation. Moreover, Beatrice, slight as she seemed, was a country girl, young and full of vigour; and she set her will bravely against his, and clutched him with all her might. The struggle went on in silence; she had no breath to waste in words; and meanwhile that awful roar was shaking the very ground on which they stood. He made one last effort to throw her off—failed—glanced up again, and saw that the death which he had sought for himself was close upon them both.

Long afterwards, when he tried to recall those terrible seconds, he

could never clearly understand the way in which their deliverance had come to pass. He had a vague remembrance of taking a wild leap with the girl in his arms; and then the roar deafened him, and a thick cloud blotted out everything from his sight. When the noise ceased, and the mists cleared away from his brain, he found himself lying on the side of the embankment. And down below, at the bottom of the bank, lay the prostrate figure of the woman who had saved his life.

Yes, she had saved him! He had come there to die, and yet, here he stood, alive and strong, with the sweet breath of morning blowing softly on his face, and the quiet fields around him. A bird on a hawthorn-bush broke out suddenly into an ecstasy of jubilant shakes and trills; a burst of sunlight bathed the buttercup meadows in wonderful glory; and God's earth rejoiced in the splendour of the bright young day. It was May-time, fresh and balmy as the May-time of his boyhood, when he had carried light burdens of blossom-laden boughs, and sung old songs for very joy of heart.

Then he sprang down the steep bank and hastened to the unconscious girl lying among the long grass. Her poor little white face looked very childish as the sunlight shone upon it; her hat had fallen off, revealing a small head covered with sunny, rippling hair, which had escaped from its pins and broken into soft curls. Very gently he swept back the golden-brown tresses that were hanging over her forehead, and, lifting her lightly, rested her head upon his knee.

There was no one at hand to bring water. The nearest habitation was a cottage in the far corner of the field; and he was wondering anxiously what he should do. At last, slowly and wearily, the eyelids unclosed, and the deep-coloured eyes met his with a bewildered look which filled him with intense pain. She was only a girl, quiet and sensitive by nature, needing all her strength to do her little share of work in the world. What if that desperate struggle for his life had broken the very mainspring of her existence?

"We are both quite safe now," he said, softly.

She took in the full meaning of his words, and the light that came quickly into her face at once dispelled his fears. For a second or two she lay quite still, and he felt that she was drinking in all the sweetness of a great deliverance. There was not a sound to break the stillness of the place, except the birds' songs, and the faint rustle of the long grass. Yet Godwin Earle was distinctly conscious that this was the most sacred moment he had ever known in his life.

"I shall be strong again in a few minutes," she said, speaking in a very quiet voice, and lifting her head from its resting-place. "Everything is a little confused. I think I must have had a fall."

He helped her to rise, and then picked up her hat from the grass, watching her silently while she tried, with unsteady fingers, to smooth her hair and set her dress in order. Just for an instant the be-

wildered look came back, and she cast a wistful glance around, as if there were something that she had suddenly missed.

"What is it?" he asked quickly. "Have you lost anything?"

"My bag. I was carrying it when—when I first caught sight of you on the embankment. I wish I could find the exact spot where I was when I saw you."

"You can't be far from it," he answered. "Only this long grass hides everything; but I was always good at finding things. We'll have that bag in a few minutes, never fear."

It was now her turn to watch him, and as her eyes followed his movements, she silently asked herself whether this could be the same man who had so lately courted death?

In spite of dark days and divers misfortunes, there was nothing in Godwin Earle's appearance that betokened a lack of prosperity. He was of middle height, slender, graceful, well-dressed; with little to distinguish him from dozens of other thoroughbred men who may be seen going in and out of the West End clubs. His skin was sun-tanned, but the hair and moustache were fair; and the eyes, of darkest grey, could flash swift lights from under their heavy lids. His settled air of quiet melancholy told you nothing at first sight, and might easily have been mistaken for simple weariness. And yet, if you had looked closely into the face, you could hardly have doubted that the lines so deeply graven there were traces of bitter pain. It was something more than mere ennui which had driven this man to the verge of suicide, and sent him forth, a wanderer in deserted fields, to seek his death alone "between the dawn and the daytime."

"Here is the bag," he said, approaching her, after a brief search, with a leather satchel in his hand. "And now I hope you are going to get some rest and refreshment. Is your home near?"

"I have lost my home." Her voice was steady and quiet, but there was a ring of sadness in the tone that might have touched a far harder heart than his. "Ever since I was two years old I have lived with my grandfather in the village yonder. He died a fortnight ago, and now I am going to London."

"But you must know people in London? Surely you are not quite without friends?"

"I have only one friend; my old governess. She is married, and I am to go and live with her. It was my grandfather's wish."

"Where does she live?" asked Godwin Earle, eagerly.

"In Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square."

He felt a thrill of relief. This sole friend of hers was living in a good neighbourhood. It would have pained him to hear that she was to spend her days in some unfitting home. This girl, so gentle and refined in all her looks and ways, was not meant to pass her life among vulgar scenes and common people. It would have been hard to picture her amid uncongenial surroundings.

Beatrice Ward was not regularly beautiful. Her features were

anything but faultless, although the blue eyes, deep-coloured and deep-set, had a singular charm of their own. But few critics could have quarrelled seriously with the oval face, and the pure cream-tints of the smooth skin ; and the slender, yet rounded figure, was moulded like a sculptor's dream. Add to all this, an unmistakable air of good-breeding, and you will scarcely wonder that Godwin Earle, a man of fastidious taste, had begun to find his new acquaintance wonderfully attractive.

Moreover, he was already beginning to be glad that she had drawn him out of the Valley of the Shadow, and led him back into the light of day. For months he had been living in solitude, embittered by a thousand cares, and half maddened by a sense of cruel wrong. He had parted himself from everyone he knew, and had led a hermit life, consumed by endless longings after all that he had known and loved best. And at last, he had found the burden of existence too heavy to be borne, and had made up his mind to fling it aside for ever.

This girl, who had stepped in so bravely between him and death, had done something more. She had made life interesting to him again.

He was not easily misled where women were concerned, and he recognised a sweet and pure nature in Beatrice Ward. She was brave ; but hers was by no means the dauntlessness of a strong-minded woman. It was the courage of a warm heart, passionately determined to save a soul from its own wild impulses. And the effort had cost her a great deal of suffering.

Although her complexion did not show many varying tints, the young face looked wan ; and there was a deep shade under the eyes, giving their intense blue an almost unnatural lustre. But earnestly, with her very might, she strove to quiet her quivering nerves, and collect her scattered thoughts.

"I must walk on to the railway station now," she said, after a little pause. "My luggage is waiting for me there. I am going by the seven o'clock train, and I wanted to take a last walk through these dear old fields. Will you promise me one thing before I say good-bye?" She raised her face beseechingly ; and her sweet voice trembled, as it always did when she was deeply moved.

"What is it?" he asked, eagerly.

"That—that you will never try to fling away your life again. Promise that you will wait till God takes it. Promise to have patience, and bear your troubles to the end."

"I do promise," he answered, gravely and solemnly. "I have not thanked you yet for having saved me ; but you don't want thanks. Trust me, I shall never forget the lesson I have learnt this morning. It will not be easy to face my life, but I am determined, now, to live it as a man ought to do. I, too, am going up to town, and I hope you will let me take care of you."

She drew a long breath of relief. Young and inexperienced as she was, an unerring instinct told her that this man might be safely relied

upon ; and she was conscious, at that moment, of a great need of protection and kindness. His promise, so gravely spoken, took away the last fear from her heart, and she felt that her weary head and strained nerves might rest. As yet she did not even know his name, nor had she told him hers, but as they walked silently, side by side, through the sweet field paths, there was a perfect understanding between them ; a mutual trust that could not have been expressed by any formal words. He saw that she was too much shaken and spent to talk, and privately resolved to watch over her till he had seen her to the very threshold of her new home. After that, what then ? Might not this strange acquaintance be the beginning of a life-long friendship ?

The railway station at Silverdean was as uncomfortable a place for waiting travellers as could be found on any line in England ; and Godwin instantly resolved to spend as little time there as possible. They had half an hour to spare ; and after looking about for a few minutes, he discovered a pretty cottage, close to the booking-office, and prevailed upon its inmates to give Beatrice a cup of hot tea. Her old home was two miles from Silverdean, and the people did not know her ; but they were civil enough to let her wash her face, and arrange her rebellious hair before a glass. She was feeling stronger and fresher when she joined Godwin again, and returned to the platform to wait for the train.

He read the name written on her luggage labels, and turned to her with a smile.

"Miss Ward," he said, "let me introduce myself as Godwin Earle. My lodgings are in Bulstrode Street ; so that we are destined to be near neighbours, you see."

"Is Bulstrode Street near Cavendish Square ?" she asked, with a true rustic ignorance of town localities.

"Very near. But is it possible that you have never seen your new home ? Don't you know anything of London ?"

"Oh, yes ; I have been several times to town with my grandfather. But we never went far beyond Regent Street and the shops. Our last trip was two years ago," she added, sadly. "That was just after Mrs. Milton married. Then his health failed, and he never left Silverdean again."

"Is Mrs. Milton your old governess ?"

"Yes, but she really is not very old, although it is just ten years since she came to us in answer to my grandfather's advertisement. She was distantly related to our Rector, and liked the idea of living in Silverdean. I was eight years old when she began to teach me — a very troublesome child, I am afraid. The Rector's daughters were her pupils too."

"You must have many friends and old companions in Silverdean. The Rector and his daughters will miss you very much."

"No one will miss me now-a-days. Goodbyes are always painful things, and yet I am scarcely sorry to be going away. The Rector's daughters were older than myself; they all married, and found new homes. One of them, who was my favourite, went to Africa to be a missionary's wife. Two years ago Miss Stuart became Mrs. Milton. Last year, the Rector died, and strangers are living in the old Rectory now. So you see that all the familiar faces had vanished from my circle before I lost my grandfather."

Her voice, always soft and quiet, had begun to tremble again when she spoke of that recent loss. Godwin Earle thought how lovely and childlike she looked, standing beside him in the morning sunshine. Through the thick cloud of his gloom and despair, this girl, Beatrice, had come flashing like a sunbeam. And perhaps because he had seen her first in the early morn, with May flowers all around her, he associated her ever afterwards with things that were fresh, and fragrant, and lovable.

There was another pause. Then a porter rang a great bell, dutifully observing the usual forms, although there were only two travellers on the platform; and the London train rushed into the dreary little station.

If a thought-reader had been near Beatrice and Godwin at that moment, he would have found that they had but one feeling between them. The girl had dreamed of a solitary journey, and dreaded it from her very heart, and this new friend had given a fresh charm to her empty life. The man, worn out with repeated misfortunes, was ready to accept her as his good angel in human shape; and both were secretly rejoicing that there was to be no parting at this cheerless railway-station—that they were to be fellow-travellers, beginning the journey of life anew on this eventful day.

There was only a brief stoppage at Silverdean; Beatrice's boxes were bundled ignominiously into the luggage-van, and she and Godwin were hustled sharply into the vacant compartment of a second-class carriage. The door was slammed, the train moved on, and these two, who had met so strangely, were alone together.

How long had they known each other? Had hours, or months, or years passed away since Beatrice caught her first glimpse of that solitary figure on the embankment? And had minutes or days elapsed since Godwin first felt the light touch of the hand on his arm, and saw her blue eyes gazing steadily into his? He looked at her as she sat in the opposite corner, her face fresh from its recent bath; her bright hair pinned up neatly under her close black hat, yet breaking out into a tiny curl here and there; her little hands clasped together on her lap. As a rule it is only in novels that new acquaintances suddenly take it into their heads to tell the history of their lives to each other; but Godwin felt that she had a right to his confidence, and was conscious of a growing desire to let her know his troubles.

The train rushed on, and Beatrice had actually forgotten to take a

last look at the quiet hills that kept guard over Silverdean, and the church tower, which was just visible through a break in the trees. Already that peaceful country life had become a thing of the past, and her heart was opening eagerly to receive new interests, although it still ached with the sense of loss.

"I shall try to get some work to do in London," she said, speaking with childlike frankness. "I hope it will be easy to find employment, for I am poor, and I want to earn some money."

"So do I," replied Godwin, with a smile that was followed by a sigh.

CHAPTER II.

OLD CORDER.

BEFORE they had got to the end of their journey, Beatrice was made acquainted with some of Godwin's troubles, and felt convinced that she should hear more of them later on. And he, on his side, had been frankly told how her grandfather had lost money in an unfortunate investment, and how his last years had been embittered by anxious thoughts about the girl's future.

She was a soldier's child, born in India, and her mother had died while she was still a baby. When Beatrice was fifteen, Captain Ward had come home to see his daughter, and had gone eastward again with many a promise of speedy reunion. But the promises were never fulfilled; the father was stricken down after a brief illness, and the young girl's only guardian was the old grandsire who felt that his own days were numbered. It was a melancholy story, and the telling of it saddened her, and drew tears from her honest blue eyes. Godwin had the greatest difficulty in the world to refrain from seizing those little hands in his, and comforting her in a somewhat demonstrative fashion. But he did not do anything of the kind; not once did he over-step the bounds of deference; and his words of consolation were very quietly and gravely spoken.

The May sunlight was shining brightly over London, and as the cab, heavily laden with her boxes, rattled along Regent Street, Beatrice's spirits began to revive. She looked around her with the fresh delight of a child, glad to find herself in such a gay world; and then, remembering the time when she had walked this very street by her grandfather's side, a mist swam before her eyes. She was not sorry to lose sight of the shops, and turn into Cavendish Square; the strength which had sustained her so well that morning was beginning to give way at last, and it was a weary face which was raised to Godwin when they drew near Mrs. Milton's door.

"Good-bye, Mr. Earle," she said. "I have to thank you very much for looking after my luggage and me."

"Don't let us talk about thanks," he answered, earnestly. "Be-

tween us, they are absurd formalities. How can I ever forget that I owe my life to you?"

She tried to speak, but words did not come readily to her lips, and he helped her out of the cab in silence. In a few seconds the door was thrown open, and Godwin caught sight of flowers in the hall; a smart page; a maid in the freshest of caps and aprons, and a quiet-looking lady in a black gown. There was a silent hand-pressure, a last look from tearful eyes, and then he found himself walking absently along Wimpole Street, and wondering whether he were really awake or in the middle of a strange dream?

His landlady belonged to the numerous class who prefer gentlemen-lodgers, "because they give so little trouble." It was a well-kept house, filled with men from top to bottom, and their comings and goings could hardly be noticed very closely in the unceasing business of household affairs. Godwin's feet carried him mechanically to the familiar door, and, letting himself in with his latch-key, he went deliberately up three flights of stairs, entered a little back bed-room, and looked around him with the vague wonder of a man who has suddenly recovered his senses after a long interval of unconsciousness.

Everything remained just as he had left it yesterday evening; the ashes of the papers he had burnt were still in the grate; his sketch-book and some chalks and pencils were lying on a little table by the bed-side. All the familiar objects seemed mutely to welcome his return; he was here, among his few possessions, once more; and yet last night he had taken a silent farewell of this very room and its contents. Instinctively he turned to the glass, and was surprised to see his own image looking much the same as usual—more worn and haggard, certainly; but not conspicuously changed.

Then, as one remembers the shadowy incidents in a dream, he recalled his aimless wanderings through the London streets, his solitary supper at a café, where he had eaten and drunk with the grim intent to strengthen himself for his purpose; his midnight journey along the South-Western line to Silverdean; more wanderings across empty fields; and that last terrible hour between the sunrise and the day. But he had not come back to dwell on memories which were enough to unsettle the strongest brain; he had returned to keep his promise to Beatrice Ward, and make a good use of the life that she had saved.

He did not feel much like a hero, it must be confessed, as he washed, and shaved, and dressed, and prepared to go back into the everyday world anew. It is not heroic to go out with the firm intention of committing suicide, and return alive and well. On the whole, Godwin was conscious that he cut a very sorry figure in his own eyes; and he tried to think as little as possible about himself as he ran down stairs and went quickly out into the sunshine.

But the bath, and the long-deferred breakfast, had helped him to look with hopeful eyes upon a future which had seemed intolerable last night. He walked with a firm step through Vere Street, and

into Oxford Street, turning his face City-wards, although he had no definite purpose in view. The streets were crowded. It was London's best time of year, and pretty faces were to be seen on every side. Shop-windows were in all their fresh glory of Summer fashions, and shop-people were up to their eyes in business. In such a bustling, cheery, active world as this, there must surely be some work somewhere for his hands to do. Commonplace old sayings, fraught with hope and comfort, came drifting into his head as he strode along in the sunlight. "It is always darkest before the dawn," said an inward voice; and his heart throbbed with the sudden conviction that his dawn was really coming at last.

He had got as far as Regent Circus when an idea darted, like a lightning-flash into his mind. It was so bright a thought, and it shaped itself with such astonishing swiftness into a substantial hope, that it actually brought him to a standstill. "Old Corder," he murmured to himself. "Old Corder! How was it that I didn't think of him before?" And then he quickened his steps, and jumped into a City omnibus.

As the omnibus rattled on, he began slowly to understand how it was that he had not thought sooner of old Corder. For a long time he had steadily refused to cut those slender threads of hope which held him to his past life. He had believed (or had tried to believe) that the hearts which had hardened against him would soften, and that the doors of his relations, closed stubbornly now, would open to him hospitably once more. And yet his intimate knowledge of the family character ought to have told him that it was best at once to accept his position as a banished man.

While those slender threads of hope remained, he would never, of course, have thought of applying to old Corder. Was not old Corder the only connection of whom the Earle family imagined that they had cause to be ashamed? To mention the name of Corder was to call blushes into the waxen cheeks of the two Misses Earle, and to raise a storm in the breast of their widowed sister, the Countess Gradi-zoff. Not one of them could even forget that Grace, the youngest and fairest of them all, had cast her pride and dignity to the winds, and, in the face of the bitterest opposition, had given her hand and heart to the son of old Corder the provision merchant.

It is true that Grace and her husband had both been in their graves for many a year, and had left no child behind them, but there are certain offenders for whom Death himself can scarcely win a pardon. The name of Corder on Grace's headstone froze up the fount of her sisters' tears, and kept their indignation always fresh. Moreover, poor Grace, with an invalid's sick yearning for her birth-place, had come back to die in Fairbridge, the stately old country town where the Earles had been "leading people" for two centuries at least. Her sisters had not been asked to receive her into the family house where she was born, for young Corder, too, was proud

after his fashion, and had taken a furnished villa for his wife to die in. They had called on her and wept over her sometimes, with a fraternal condescension which afforded her but small comfort ; but young Godwin, just home from school, and untroubled by much consciousness of dignity, had showed a good deal of real feeling for his pretty Aunt Grace. Once or twice, when he was leaving the sick room, he remembered that he had come in contact with an elderly man, who had looked at him with penetrating eyes, but they had passed each other with only a few words of greeting. That elderly man was old Corder.

The Countess Gradizoff, then living in Russia with her husband, had written furious letters about the Corders ; and the sisters, who had always succumbed to her imperious temper, were made doubly stern and miserable after reading one of these epistles. But Godwin liked Caroline Gradizoff less than any of his aunts, and those angry commands of hers invariably roused in him a spirit of disobedience.

With his head full of old recollections, Godwin Earle got out of the omnibus, and turned quickly into Aldersgate Street ; and then, all at once, the clouds of doubt began to hide the brightness of his new hope, and he asked himself whether he had not started off on a fool's errand.

Of all names under heaven, old Corder must certainly hold the name of Earle in deepest detestation. His son had never recovered the death of that fair wife who had stooped so low as to marry him. Frank Corder, ardent and intense, had lost all interest in life in losing Grace, and had only survived her one year. And old Corder, alone and childless in his last days, could scarcely be censured, if he laid the blame of all his bitterest sorrows upon that unfortunate marriage.

"How can I expect him to receive me civilly?" thought Godwin, walking with slow steps and downcast eyes. "Should I feel inclined to be civil if I were in his place? It seems to me that I may as well turn back at once, and spare myself unnecessary mortification.

But, chancing to raise his eyes at that moment, he saw the name of Corder staring him full in the face, and found himself close to an old-fashioned office window.

Apparently it was the whim of Mr. Corder to despise alterations, and to stick as closely as possible to the premises which his father had left him. The arrangement of goods, which might be seen above the ground glass of the lower half of the window, was simple in the extreme. Sauces, pickles, and tinned meats displayed themselves in orderly rows ; but there was no attempt at ornament, no departure from long established rules. The warehouse was small, considering the amount of business that was done in it ; the ceiling was low, and all the fittings were of the plainest description. Even the clerks had a staid and sober look, and seemed to have little in common with their jaunty fraternity of the present day. If Corder's establishment had been one of those gorgeous palaces of trade which it is the

fashion to erect nowadays, it is doubtful whether Godwin Earle would have found courage to cross its threshold. But this unpretentious, antiquated place gave him a good impression of the man who owned it ; and, feeling more awkward than he had ever felt in his whole life, he went in.

"Can I see Mr. Corder?" he asked, addressing himself to an elderly young man who was making up a sample of tea.

"I will inquire, sir," was the answer, delivered with studied politeness.

There was a little waiting, and then, from the obscure end of the long warehouse, came a tall, thin man, white-haired, and with spectacles on his respectable Roman nose. In Godwin's memory Mr. Corder was by no means so imposing an individual as the person who now advanced to meet him ; and he was considerably surprised at the change that time had wrought.

"Do you wish to see Mr. Corder, himself?" inquired the white-haired man in measured tones.

"I do," said Godwin, promptly, tendering him a card. "I wish to see him on important business."

The old clerk bowed, took the card, and disappeared once more into obscurity, while Godwin waited among the sauces and pickles with a heavy heart.

But he had not long to wait. The old clerk came back quickly, and said : "Follow me, if you please." And Godwin did follow him, into a little den full of ledgers and papers, and up a narrow staircase to another den, larger than the room below, and furnished with two arm-chairs.

From one of these chairs a small, spare man rose slowly, and greeted the visitor with a grave bend of the head. He wore no spectacles ; and no sooner did Godwin meet those steady, penetrating eyes than he knew that he had never quite forgotten old Corder.

"I ought to apologise for calling on you, Mr. Corder," he began, frankly. "I have no excuse to offer, except that I am in need and trouble."

The old merchant bent his head again, and his keen eyes seemed to be searching the young man through and through. As yet poverty had not reduced Godwin Earle to cheap coats and trousers, and he kept all the unconscious grace and stateliness of bearing inherited from a long line of military ancestors. And in spite of his worn face and melancholy eyes, it could not be said that he looked like a man who had been fighting a hard battle with an evil fortune. Were thoughts like these passing through old Corder's mind, as he sat quietly scanning his visitor, and waiting for him to speak again? Godwin did not know. The old man's face was utterly inscrutable, and he felt that his task was becoming almost too hard for him.

"I have come," he said, abruptly, "to ask if you can find some work for me to do. I have no help, and no friends, and in a little while I shall be starving."

For the first time since Godwin had entered the room, the merchant's glance wavered. He looked away quickly to the dusty window-panes which admitted a few yellow City sunbeams; and even in that anxious moment Godwin noticed the deep furrows on his forehead and cheeks. If the young man had found eighteen months of misfortune too heavy for him to bear, how could this old man have endured years of sorrow and loneliness? An empty home, a bereaved heart, a life from which everything that was interesting had been taken—surely it must have required no common courage to face the wide-reaching desert of such an existence, and fix the tired eyes on the horizon line that seemed so faint and far away.

"I must first know what you can work at, Mr. Earle," answered old Corder, after a slight pause.

"There lies my difficulty." The young man spoke openly, encouraged by his tone. "I have never been trained for office work; but I am heartily willing to learn book-keeping."

"You have been abroad as a secretary, I believe?" said the merchant, after another brief silence.

"Yes; my mother's only brother, Sir Albert Lane, was appointed governor of one of the Indian provinces, and I went out with him. I dare say you have heard that my uncle failed in his diplomacy and was recalled. His staff and dependents fell from him; he returned to England in shattered health, and died soon after his arrival. He was the last survivor of my mother's people, and in him I lost my sole friend."

"You surprise me." Mr. Corder had listened attentively. "I thought you would always find a home with your aunts at Fairbridge. You lived with them as a boy, I remember."

"My father left me to their care when he died," said Godwin, quietly. "But they have all turned against me."

"And your uncle—Canon Earle?"

"He always agrees with my aunts, and he has turned against me, too. For a year I have been fighting with my fate, and hoping in spite of constant discouragement, and now I have made up my mind to accept my position. I shall not try any more to set myself right in my aunts' eyes. They must think as badly of me as they please; I will never trouble them again."

Once more the old merchant bent a scrutinising gaze upon the speaker, but Godwin could meet it without shrinking.

"I am quite friendless; my little stock of money is nearly exhausted. My father, Colonel Earle, was a poor man, and had no fortune to leave behind him; besides, it was always expected that Sir Albert Lane would look after my future. It is hardly fair that you should be bothered with all these uninteresting details," added the young man, apologetically. "And yet I can't help saying that you are the last hope I have."

Again there was a silence. For some seconds old Corder seemed

to be absorbed in his own reflections, and then there came a sudden lighting up of his furrowed face.

"You are not so very much changed, after all," he said, abruptly. "Your eyes are the same as ever; and they are poor Grace's eyes. You haven't quite forgotten your Aunt Grace, I suppose?"

"No; if she had lived I should never have wanted a friend."

"Well, well, there's no need for despair." The old man's look and tone were full of encouragement. "But we must talk matters over quietly, and then we shall see what you are fit for. What do you say to dining with me this evening?"

Godwin accepted the invitation with genuine pleasure.

"I am living in lodgings now," Mr. Corder went on. "After my son's death I gave up my house in Kensington, and took to bachelor habits. You will find me in Clarges Street."

And then, after a few more words, Godwin Earle found himself in the old-fashioned warehouse again, and passed out into the street, hardly able to realise his own good fortune. Old Corder meant to take him by the hand; there was no doubt of that; and he was well enough acquainted with the state of the Corder finances to know that this help would be of the most effectual kind. There had never been much money in the Earle family; and the aunts at Fairbridge, although they were deeply disgusted at Grace's marriage, had sometimes bestowed a half-envious thought on her easy circumstances. It was no wonder, if, after the rumours heard in his boyhood, young Earle was ready to believe the merchant's resources to be almost inexhaustible.

Godwin Earle had lived much in the world without becoming altogether a worldly man. There were depths in his nature which his relations had never touched; feelings which they had never understood. Under that graceful society manner of his, he had always carried a warm heart. He could not accept Mr. Corder's kindness without giving him something stronger than gratitude in return; and already he had vowed to himself that he would try to brighten the old man's lonely life, and fill the place of the son he had lost.

Full of hope and courage, he walked back slowly westward. But who can say what mysterious impulse prompted him to saunter along Wimpole Street, and pass the Miltons' house again?

It was certainly an attractive-looking house, bright and fresh of aspect, and the open windows afforded glimpses of pretty lace curtains. As he looked, a Victoria drew up before the door. Two ladies descended; and he caught another view of the flower-decked hall, and the smart page; and wished that he, too, had the right of entrance. Only a few hours ago he had left Beatrice Ward at that very threshold; but it seemed as if a month at least had gone by since their parting!

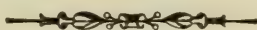
And then his thoughts drifted back to another woman's face—a face that had been the guiding star of his early manhood.

Far away in India, amid strange scenes, and divers temptations, he had preserved the memory of his early love ; and clung to her still—

“Through change that teaches to forget.”

But now the hope was dead ; the dream was over ; and the ashes of her last letter were scattered about the grate in his room. Many a young love has a like ending. And many a lover lives long enough to be thankful to the kind fate that took his fancied bliss away.

(To be continued.)



A REQUIEM.

PEACE !—the eyelids gently cover,
Lay the arms across the breast,
For the world's wild din is over,
And the evening bringeth Rest.

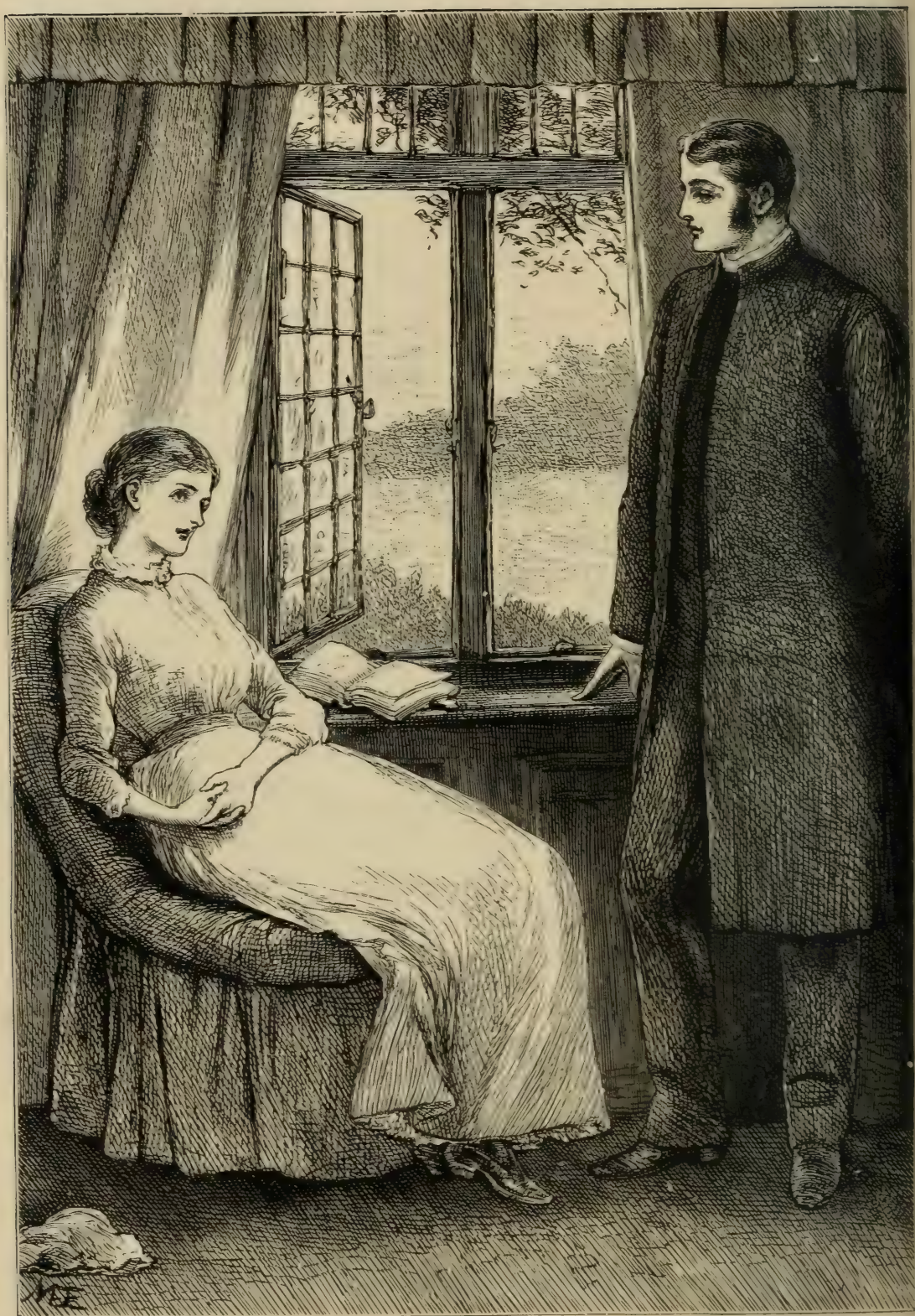
Life has fled—and no to-morrow
Dawns upon that placid brow,
All its sin and all its sorrow—
Only God can know it now.

Hark ! the funeral bell is ringing,
Lay her down beneath the sod—
But the angel-bands are singing
In the Paradise of God.

All is past ; alone, forsaken,
What is mortal may decay,
But the spirit shall awaken
To a new and glorious day.

Peace !—the eyelids gently cover,
Lay the arms across the breast,
For the world's wild din is over,
And the evening bringeth Rest.

H. B. F.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR

"KYLE," SHE SAID, SMILING, "I HAVE HAD SUCH A LOVELY DREAM!"

THE ARGOSY.

FEBRUARY, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER III.

THE EARL OF AVON.

THE Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen took possession of the living of Great Whitton, having been appointed to it by Lord Avon. And the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten remained, as before, at Little Whitton.

Changes took place. They take place everywhere. The most notable one was the marriage of Mr. Baumgarten.

That he had been grievously disappointed and annoyed at the appointment of another to the living, which he had been led to suppose would be his, was a bitter fact. He set it down to the caprice of great men, and strove to live down the sting. The chief difficulty lay in his contemplated marriage: and he deliberated with himself whether he ought for the present to abandon it, or to carry it out. He decided upon the latter course. It is probable that he deemed he could not in honour withdraw now; and it is more than probable that, once having allowed himself to cherish his hopes and his love, he was not stoic enough to put them from him again. Finally he resolved to leave the decision to Edith Dane.

"What do you say, Edith?" he asked her. "Shall we throw prudence to the winds, and come together for better, for worse?"

"Nay, Ryle, it is for you to decide that," she answered, a hundred blushes on her pretty cheeks.

"I think not," he answered. "For I should decide it all one way: and it might not, for you, be the best way. Should you be afraid to risk housekeeping on my stipend, Edith? Two hundred a year, you know, my love, all told."

"No, I should not," she whispered.

"So be it, then," he answered. "And, with your mother's permission, we will have the wedding at once."

Mrs. Dane gave the permission readily. As long as she lived, and was with them, her small income would augment theirs. And within

a month of Mr. Baumgarten's disappointment, he and Edith became man and wife.

"You do quite right," warm-hearted little Mr. Brice had assured them. "The cuttings and contrivings necessary to make a small income go as far as a large one, render a young couple all the happier. I ought to know : mine was small enough for many a year of my married life ; it's not much else now."

The autumn was advancing when Lord Avon came down to pay a visit to his mother. His lordship brought with him full intentions to have it out with her, and with Grace, about that matter in the summer. He began with his mother. She knew no more of it than he did, she protested resentfully, for she was still sore upon the point. All she could say was that he had written to promise her the living for Mr. Baumgarten, and then gave it to Wilfred Elliotsen.

Grace was more impervious still. She simply refused to discuss the subject at all, telling her brother to hold his tongue.

"I don't see why you should blame *me*, mother," remonstrated the young man. "It was certainly no fault of mine."

"It was your fault, Henry," retorted Lady Avon.

"I told you of Grace's peremptory letter."

"Who but you would heed the wild letter of a girl? You should have waited for me to confirm it. As I did not do so, you ought to have written to me before acting. I did not myself care for Mr. Baumgarten to have Great Whitton ; it was Grace who worried me into asking it of you ; but as you promised it to him, it should have been his. You cannot picture to yourself, Henry, half the annoyance it has cost me."

Lord Avon could picture it very well. All this arose from Grace's absurd caprice. She had been indulged all her life—and did just as she pleased.

"And for you to put so silly a young fellow as Elliotsen into it!" went on Lady Avon, enlarging on her grievances. "I told you his wife would make him play all kinds of pranks in the church."

"What does he do?" asked Lord Avon.

"Very ridiculous things indeed. He has put a lot of brass candlesticks on the communion table, and he turns himself about and bows down at different parts of the service, and she sweeps her head forward in a fashion that sets the whole church staring. We are not used to these innovations, Henry."

Lady Avon was correct in saying so. The innovations were innovations in those days; now they are looked upon almost as matters of history, as if they had come in with William the Conqueror.

"And the parish is not pleased with them?" returned Lord Avon.

"Pleased with them!" echoed his mother. "He began by wanting to make every soul in the parish, labourers and all, attend daily service in the church from eight o'clock to nine, allowing them ten minutes for breakfast and fifty for prayers ; and she has dressed the

Sunday School in scarlet cloaks, with a large white linen cross sewn down the back. One thing is not liked at all: the inexperienced rustics cannot be made to understand which way he wants them to turn at the Creeds; so he has planted some men behind the free benches every Sunday with long white wands, and the moment the Belief begins, down come the wands, rapping the heads of the doubtful ones.* You have no idea of the commotion it causes."

Lord Avon burst into a laugh. "I'd have run down for a Sunday before this, had I known the fun that was going on," said he. "The girls must take care the bulls don't run at their scarlet cloaks."

"Ah, Henry, you young men regard these things but as matters for irreverent joking. Mr. Baumgarten would not have served us so."

"I suppose not. Do you get up to attend the early week-day service, mother?"

"Not I. I can say my prayers more quietly at home. Elliotsen does not force the rich to the early service; only the poor—when he can do so. He tells us he leaves it between ourselves and our consciences."

"You'd be geese if you went," said my lord. "I'll talk to him."

"It will not do any good, Henry. If you'd talk to *her* perhaps it might; it is she who has done it all." And Lord Avon laughed again. He was a man of middle height, spare and angular, with a kindly, honest face, but not a handsome or a clever one.

Presently he walked out. In one of the pleasant green lanes with which the place abounded, he suddenly encountered Brice, the surgeon, who was coming along at a steaming pace.

"Walking for a wager?" cried he.

"That's it; your lordship has just hit it," replied the surgeon, grasping warmly the ready hand held out to him. "I and Time often have a match together, and sometimes he wins and sometimes I do."

They had always been good friends, these two, from the time when the boy, Henry Carmel—for it was before his father came to the title—would fall into no end of out-door random scrapes, and the little doctor, as far as he could, shielded him and brought him out of them. The Earl then reigning was a valetudinarian, Henry's uncle, and the boy spent three parts of his time with him at Avon House.

"When did you come down?" asked Mr. Brice.

"Only this morning. My mother seems pretty well, I think?"

"Y—es," assented the surgeon, with slight hesitation. "She would be much better, though, if she'd let the world wag its own way and not trouble herself trying to set it to rights."

"Meaning the new parson and his new ways?" laughed Lord Avon, who talked more freely with the surgeon than he would have done with anyone else. "She has been treating me to a history of the nonsense."

* An absolute fact; occurring in a rural church at the time such movements began, many years ago.

"Well, and it is nonsense; just that," said Mr. Brice. "I ventured to say a few words of remonstrance to Mr. Elliotsen one day. 'Oh,' answered he, good naturedly, 'but these new ways are all the rage in the fashionable world now'; 'May be so, sir,' said I; 'but what suits a fashionable congregation does not suit a rustic parish.' 'Not all at once,' he readily answered, 'but they'll get used to it, Brice, they'll get used to it.' Perhaps they may."

"I'm sure my mother never will," spoke Lord Avon. "To begin with, she dislikes Elliotsen. At least, she disliked his coming to Great Whitton."

"She wanted Mr. Baumgarten to have it."

Lord Avon looked surprised. "Did you know of that, Brice?"

"Most of us knew of it down here. For several days, more than a week, I think, it was understood that you had actually given him the living."

"What—understood publicly?"

"Publicly and privately too. Baumgarten began to make preparations for moving into the Rectory; he arranged with old Mrs. Chester to take over some of her furniture. It was the certainty he had shown which made it so mortifying for him when the upshot came."

To judge by Lord Avon's face just now, some of the mortification had travelled to himself. He was looking through the branches of the trees overshadowing the lane, their foliage beautiful with the changing tints of autumn, his far-off gaze bent on the blue sky beyond the hills, as if seeking a solution there of something he could not understand.

"I was sorry myself," said Mr. Brice. "Lady Avon talked to me and Mrs. Dane talked to me, lamenting your caprice—if I may presume to say it, my lord," he added, with a twinkle. "It tried Mrs. Dane much."

"It was not caprice, Brice. I did give Mr. Baumgarten the living; that is, I gave my mother a promise it should be his, which is the same thing; and I afterwards retracted the promise and gave it to Elliotsen. Of course it looked like caprice, and very shameful caprice; but—but," Lord Avon hesitated, "you will believe me, I dare say, when I tell you I was not to blame."

"In my own mind I could not at the time think you were. It was not like you. How was it?"

"It is a thing which I cannot explain, Brice, even to you. A mistake was made in—well, let us say in more quarters than one. It has been put down to my score hitherto, I find, and it can continue to be so. I am very very sorry if it tried Mrs. Dane."

Mr. Brice recounted the past circumstances in a few words. Lord Avon listened.

"So Baumgarten and Edith married on the strength of possessing Great Whitton!" he remarked. "I wish—I wish ——"

"No; they got engaged on the strength of possessing it—and were

married all the same when they knew they should not have it," interrupted the surgeon. "Their prospects are not grand; the living is small, as I dare say you know, and there's no habitable house."

Lord Avon nodded. Little Whitton was not in his gift, and he did not personally know Mr. Baumgarten.

"Naturally Mrs. Dane feels anxious about their future. When she dies, her income dies with her. And two or three months will about bring the end. I have just left her sitting under the pear-tree in the garden; she is out of doors most fine days. And upon my word, I must be going on," concluded the doctor.

They shook hands and parted. Lord Avon strolled onwards with a clouded face. When staying at Avon House, a boy, he used to go over to Mr. Dane to do Latin with him in the day time; Mrs. Dane was very fond of the boy, and he was fond of her. He would rather, now that he was a man, have brought vexation upon everyone in the two parishes than upon Mrs. Dane.

"If ever Grace gets me into a bother of this kind again, she shall pay for it!" thought his lordship.

By and by, he came in view of Whitton Cottage. Mrs. Dane was still seated under the pear-tree. Seeing Lord Avon, she waved her hand to him, and he opened the gate and entered.

"What a stranger you are!" were her first words.

He kept her hand in his as he sat down on the bench beside her. She had a light fleecy kerchief thrown over her white net cap, and a warm shawl wrapped about her shoulders. Her face, always a delicate one, looked ominously so now; it was so changed as to give Lord Avon an unpleasant thrill.

"Dear Mrs. Dane! I am sure you have been very ill."

"I have been, and am," she answered. "You see the difference in me, don't you?"

"I confess I do," he acknowledged. "Cannot Brice do anything better for you?"

"No one can in this world," she gently said. "The last days here must come for us all, and they are upon me. Ah, my dear, if we, all of us, can but be prepared for them!—you see I talk to you with the familiarity of old days!" she concluded, a smile upon her wan face.

"I hope you will never talk to me in any other way," he said, with earnest impulse. "Do you remember how you used to lecture me, 'Henry, I will not have you do this'—'Henry, you must do the other!' Why you know you were as good to me as a mother."

"I like to sit and think of the days gone by," she said, "and I very often think of you. When we old people are no longer able to employ our time at useful work, we find occupation in recalling the past; a great pleasure lies in it."

"You are not old, dear Mrs. Dane."

"I am not quite fifty yet, my dear, but I am old in one sense—that I am close upon the end of life. Those who are so may surely

be called old, estimating age, you see, by the duration of their time here. And, do you know," she added, in low, loving tones, "that when we reach this stage, we almost long for the final change—for the better, brighter life which is waiting for us."

"But you must have regrets," said Lord Avon.

"True. All must have them in a degree. We cannot help regretting this world, the only home we have known. It has not been all sunshine; rather, perhaps, one of storm; yet we know its best and its worst, and we are entering one which we do not know, and so there must always lie within us a half wish to stay here longer. And then—and then ——"

Mrs. Dane's voice sank to a whisper. She paused.

"And then?" he softly whispered.

"And then God's loving Presence resumes its sway within us with all its reassuring comfort, and regrets are lost in a glow of happiness. May it be with you, my dear, when your own turn shall come!"

Lord Avon swallowed down a lump in his throat. Mrs. Dane's hand was still in his; he pressed it gratefully, and there ensued a silence.

"It must seem hard to you, though, to leave your children here."

"Yes, especially Edith. I have not seen much of Charlotte since her marriage; she is coming down now to stay a week or two. Edith is married also."

"Yes," he assented: but the subject was not a pleasant one. Mrs. Dane pursued it.

"I feel anxious about Edith. I cannot help fearing that she is not strong; that if the battle of life should prove fierce, she will not be able to breast it. She is lying down now. Their income is small, and they have no residence, as we had. Mr. Baumgarten means to take pupils; but there is a difficulty in that also."

"In what way?"

"This cottage is not adapted for pupils, it could not accommodate them; and, besides the risk which the taking a larger house might involve, furniture would be needed—and that also involves cost."

"Yes," said Lord Avon. "Are there no daily pupils to be had?"

"Not any; not one that we can think of. People like to send their boys out now, to public schools or large private ones. Some nights I lie awake reproaching myself for having sanctioned Edith's marriage. When matters were first arranged for it, Mr. Baumgarten understood he was to have Great Whitton—perhaps you know that. And then, when it was found to have been a mistake, he still said he would marry, and I did not dissent. Of course it was an awkward and unfortunate thing altogether, and ——But I do not wish to enter into it," broke off Mrs. Dane. "Edith is very happy, and we must hope for the best ——"

"Let me say a word to you, dear Mrs. Dane," he interrupted; "I used to bring my secrets to you in the days of yore. Do you remem-

ber one in particular? A boy got into the pond of Great Whitton, and was nearly drowned, and I had the credit of having pushed him in, and was punished for it by Mr. Dane."

"I remember it well, Henry," she said, calling him unconsciously by the old familiar name. "It was Jack Whittaker."

"Just so. Everyone fell upon my devoted head, reproaching me with being a wicked and cruel youngster, safe to come to a bad end. I took their abuse quietly, and I took Mr. Dane's punishment—a fearful task of Greek, which to me was punishment in earnest: and when the thing was all over and done with, I whispered the truth to you one day in your dressing-room, as you were sewing up a rent which I had torn in my jacket-sleeve—that it was not I who had thrown Whittaker into the pond. Did you believe me?"

"Yes, my dear, I did believe you; to me you were ever truthful. You would not tell me who it was that threw him in, though; I recollect that."

"I'll tell you now. It was Jack himself."

"Jack Whittaker threw himself in?"

Lord Avon nodded. "He had been at some mischief at Mr. Chester's; stealing the apricots, I believe; and he was getting away when he heard a hue and cry behind him. In his terror, for Whittaker was an arrant coward, he dashed to the side of the pond, meaning to hide himself among the rushes; missing his footing, he dashed right into it. I was standing by, and saw the process. After all, the noise was not in pursuit of him, but of a bull which had got loose from Farmer Ulthorn's field."

"Why did you take the punishment?"

"When he floundered out, like a drowned rat, I helping him, he begged and implored of me not to say that he had jumped in. I gave him my word I would not. That's how it was.—Well, you believed me then, dear Mrs. Dane, and I know you will believe me now. You have blamed me in your heart for promising Great Whitton to Mr. Baumgarten, and then annulling it by bestowing it elsewhere, but—the fault did not lie with me."

"No! With Lady Avon, perhaps."

"No, no, no: she wished Mr. Baumgarten to have it. The whole affair was the result of an unfortunate mistake. I committed it, but in unconscious error, which I and my mother alike regret. Suffer this explanation to rest quite between ourselves, please. I should not have made it but that I cannot bear for the dear old friend of my boyhood to think unkindly of me. I saw Jack Whittaker the other day," continued Lord Avon, his tone changing to a lighter one as he rose to depart. "We met in Piccadilly."

"How is Jack getting on?"

"Very well, I believe. He has his post in the Red Tape Office and a good income besides from his uncle's property. He told me he had married a charming girl, asked me if I would not go down to

see her. They live on the banks of the Thames, somewhere near Richmond."

"How long shall you remain here?" questioned Mrs. Dane, as she held his hand in parting.

"Only a few days. I am going into Warwickshire for some shooting. Give my love to Edith—if that's a proper message to a young lady who is married," he concluded, laughing.

As he was walking homewards, a clergyman, walking quickly, met and passed him. A young man, tall and stately, whose dark deep-set, beautiful eyes, looked somewhat enquiringly at Lord Avon, and the latter knew it must be the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. But Mr. Baumgarten did not guess that the unpretending, homely-faced stranger was the nobleman who had served him that cruel trick.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LAST JOURNEY.

MR. BAUMGARTEN came softly forth from his house in the brightness of the early summer morning, closing the door noiselessly behind him, that he might not disturb his wife above. She was in delicate health, and he had left her asleep. He was on his way to a sick parishioner, now lying in danger.

When Mrs. Baumgarten awoke, not long afterwards, she lay thinking of a dream she had just had. So real and vivid did it seem, that at first she wondered where she was, and looked round at the familiar objects of the bedchamber in doubt.

"Why, it was only a dream!" she exclaimed. "I am at home, and in my own bed. But where's Ryle?"

It was unusual for him to be away so early. Then she remembered that he had said last night he must go at seven o'clock to old Miss Knightley's, who was dangerously ill.

Presently she got up, and dressed herself with trembling fingers. She was weak, and languid, and hot; always in a fever now. Looking about for the coolest dress she had, she put it on: a black-and-white muslin. They were in mourning for Mrs. Dane. She had died the previous winter. Summer had come round again, and it was nearly a year now since Edith's marriage.

When she had quite finished—dressing, and reading, and prayers—she sat down in an easy-chair before the open window, letting the sweet morning air fan her hectic face. The sun shone in the blue sky; the scent of new-mown hay came from a near meadow, the hum of bees sounded drowsily in the heat; butterflies fluttered across the green lawn from flower to flower.

As the clock struck eight, Mr. Baumgarten returned; he nodded to Edith from the garden, came in, and ran up stairs. It was their breakfast hour.

"I hoped to find you asleep still, Edith," he said. "I wish you would breakfast in bed!"

"Oh, Ryle, I could not; I am glad to be up; bed tires me, I think. How is Miss Knightley?"

"Somewhat better. Brice was there before me. They think now she may rally."

He was standing before her at the opposite side of the window, partly leaning from it.

"Ryle," she said, smiling, "I have had such a lovely dream!"

"Indeed! It is not often you dream. What was it?"

"No, scarcely ever. When Charlotte and I were children, she used to tell her dreams of a morning. I felt quite jealous, because I never had any to tell."

"Well, what was this one?"

"I thought I had a long, long journey to take, and as I set out from the door here and walked down the path to the gate, I looked round and saw you in the parlour alone. I don't know where I went, or which way; it was all strange to me. It seemed as if I went miles and miles and miles; more than I can reckon; more than there are miles in the world. But oh, the way was lovely. The air was so light and balmy that I seemed to float along in an ecstasy. The most enchanting flowers, sweeter and lovelier and more brilliant than we can imagine out of a dream, grew on each side the way. It seemed that I had never known before what happiness was, what enjoyment meant; and it was all so vivid that when I awoke I thought it was reality."

"A pleasant dream," remarked Mr. Baumgarten. "How did it end?"

"It had no ending. I was still gliding along amidst the flowers when I awoke. It took me ever so long to realise that I was in my own bed and had not gone on that beautiful journey."

"I hope the journey has made you hungry," he lightly said. "Breakfast must be waiting."

Edith rose with a sigh; sighing after those charming flowers, she said. Mr. Baumgarten laughed.

"Old wives tell us that a morning dream comes true," she remarked gaily, as they went down stairs; but I am sure this one never will. We do not take those long journeys in this world, or see flowers so bright."

That dream occurred on Friday morning. It was the last Friday in June. On the Tuesday morning following, Edith Baumgarten was lying in extreme peril; the doctors giving little hope of her life.

Mr. Baumgarten was sitting by her bedside, holding her hand in his; his tears were kept back, his voice was low with suppressed grief. "Do not say 'we have been happy,' my darling; say 'we are.' I cannot part with you; there is hope yet."

"There is none," she wailed—"there is none. Oh, Ryle, my husband, it will be a hard parting!"

She feebly drew his face to hers, and his tears fell upon it. "Edith, if I lose you, I shall lose all that is of value to me in life."

A tap at the door, and then a middle-aged woman, holding a very young infant in her arms, put in her head and looked at Mr. Baumgarten. "The doctors are coming up, sir."

He lingered an instant after the medical men entered the chamber, but he gathered nothing, and could not ask questions there; so he left it, and went downstairs. There, his face pressed against the window, he stood thinking how unkind fate was to him.

On Sunday Edith had seemed better than usual. When she left the church after morning service she glanced up at the old clock, saw that it wanted twenty minutes to one, and that she should just have time to go to Miss Knightley's and ask after her, for they had not heard that morning.

She did not intend to go in; but hearing that the old lady was much better and sitting up, Edith, pressed by the servant, went up "just for a minute." The minute lengthened itself out, and as she left the house again, one o'clock struck.

"Dear me!" thought Edith, "I shall keep dinner and Ryle waiting. I must take the near way home."

The near way was the field way, and would shorten the distance by about two minutes. Edith came to the stile at the end of the field; haste made her careless, and in getting over it she fell, rather heavily. It did not hurt her that she knew of: the doctors, when told of it, did not say so. Mr. Baumgarten heard them leave the sick chamber, and turned from the window to receive them.

"Well," he uttered, his tone fraught with pain.

"There is no improvement, sir; there can be none," said the stranger who had been called in, a very plain-speaking man. "If she could but have rallied—but she cannot. She will sink, we fear, from exhaustion."

"She may recover yet," was the sharp interruption, made in anguish; "I am sure she may. But a few days ago, well; and now ——"

"Mr. Baumgarten," said Dr. Conway, "would it be right to deceive you—to give you hope where none exists? If we did, you would blame us afterwards. The sad truth is that she cannot be saved."

Mr. Brice, lingering behind the physician, laid his hand gently upon Mr. Baumgarten's arm, his voice and eyes alike full of pity.

"It must be God's will, my friend. Try to bear it."

Mr. Baumgarten only answered with a groan. "Cannot *you* give me hope, Brice?"

"Alas," said the surgeon, "I have none to give."

And yet, later in the day, she did seem a little better: it was the rallying of the spirit before departure. She knew it was deceitful strength, but it put hope into the heart of Mr. Baumgarten.

"Ryle, if he should live, you will always be kind to him?"

"Edith! Kind to *him*! Oh, my wife, my wife," he uttered, with a burst of irrepressible emotion, "you must not go, and leave him and me."

She waited until he was calmer; she was far more collected than he.

"*You* will love him?" she reiterated faintly; "you will always protect him against the world's unkindness?"

"Ay; that I swear to you," he ardently replied. And Edith Baumgarten breathed a sigh of relief, and quietly lay back upon her pillow.

Her voice, hardly to be heard at all, was growing fainter and fainter. Her husband thought it must be the faintness attendant on death; but for a short time she seemed to sleep.

He sat on: his arm beneath her neck, his other hand held one of her hands. All was still; so still that the ticking of Edith's watch, lying on the dressing-table, was audible. About ten minutes had thus passed when a slight cry from the infant in the next room, followed by the soothing hush of the nurse, fell upon Mr. Baumgarten's ear.

"Ryle! Ryle!"

"My dear?" he breathed, vexed that her sleep should have been disturbed.

"I have been in that dream again—going on my long, long journey," she said in disjointed syllables. "Oh, Ryle, I know it now: it is the journey of death."

"My dear wife!" he cried, much distressed.

"The air is—oh, so sweet—and the light at the far end so bright and lovely—and the flowers—look at the flowers!—they are the flowers of Heaven!—and—and—oh, look! look! ——"

The tone, growing inaudible, had taken a glad sound of ecstasy: and with the last word, the spirit passed away.

When the inhabitants of Little Whitton rose up on Wednesday morning, the church bell was tolling—proclaiming that poor Edith Baumgarten, daughter of their late pastor and wife of their present, had set out on the long last journey.

Whether it be death that disturbs a community, or whether it be birth or marriage, time goes on all the same. After the funeral of Mrs. Baumgarten, the parish flocked to Whitton Cottage to condole with their Rector, and to see the baby. He received them with quiet courtesy, but the most sanguine sympathisers could not detect any encouragement for a renewal of the visit. All that could make life pleasant to Mr. Baumgarten was as yet buried in the grave of Edith.

Gradually he began to take notice of the child; at first he had avoided him. The old servant, Dinah, who had lived with the Danes for years, took charge of him. Mr. Baumgarten would some-

times have him on his knee now, and soon loved him with an impassioned fondness. He had nothing else to love.

Following close upon Edith's death, a distant relative bequeathed a few hundred pounds to Mr. Baumgarten. The money came to him quite unexpectedly, and he decided to use it in putting the Rectory into habitable repair. This was done; and he moved into it with his two servants, Ann and Dinah, both of them elderly women.

Thus the months glided on to winter: the Rector fulfilling all his duties as of yore, but leading a very lonely life. He was a sociable man by nature and full of ambition: but for him social ties seemed to be at an end, and his position offered no prospect whatever of change or advancement. So far as the present look-out went, he might expect to live and die at Little Whitton.

One bright, frosty day in January, when the icicles shone in the sun and the blue sky was cloudless, the open carriage of Lady Avon drew up at the Rectory gate; just as the reader once saw it stop at that of Whitton Cottage; but it had only one occupant now, and that was herself. After the marriage of Mr. Baumgarten, Lady Avon had occasionally attended Little Whitton church as heretofore, but Lady Grace never. She had always excuses ready, and her mother—who had never fathomed, or even suspected, the true cause of Grace's caprice as to the living—put faith in them. The Countess declined to alight, and Mr. Baumgarten went out to the gate.

"Would it be troubling you very much, Mr. Baumgarten, to come to Avon House occasionally and pass an hour with me?" began she, as they shook hands.

"Certainly not, if you wish it," he replied. "If I can render you any service I shall be very happy to come."

Lady Avon lowered her voice and bent towards him. "I am not happy in my mind, Mr. Baumgarten; not easy. The present world is passing away from me, and I know little of the one I am entering. I don't like the Rector of Great Whitton; he does not suit me; but with you I feel at home. I shall be obliged to you to come up once or twice a week, and pass a quiet hour with me."

"I will do so. But I hope you find nothing more than usual the matter with your health."

"Time will prove," replied Lady Avon. "How is your little boy?"

"He gets on famously; he is a brave little fellow," returned Mr. Baumgarten, his eyes brightening. "Would you like to see him? I will have him brought out."

"I should like to see him; yes; but I will come in."

He helped her from the low carriage, and gave her his arm up the path, and the most comfortable chair by the parlour fire. The child was brought in by Dinah—a pretty babe in a white frock and black ribbons, the latter worn in memory of his mother.

Lady Avon took him on her knee.

He will resemble you," she said, scanning his face ; " he has your eyes exactly, deep and dark "—and she had nearly added " beautiful." The child put his hand upon her ermine boa.

" My pretty boy ! " she exclaimed fondly. " What is his name ? "

" Cyrus. I know it would have pleased Edith to have him named after her father."

" Ah. Poor Edith ! " sighed Lady Avon, as she gave the child back to Dinah, and rose. " Not the least distressing feature of that loss was its suddenness. I wished I could have come over to say farewell."

Mr. Baumgarten sighed in answer, as he again gave his arm to Lady Avon. " By the way," she said as he was settling her in the carriage, " I must congratulate you upon getting into the Rectory. You paid the cost of the repairs yourself, I believe."

" Yes. I had some money left me unexpectedly, and used it for the purpose."

" From your father ? "

" Oh, no ; from a very distant relative—Colonel Baumgarten. My father has been dead several years. He was a clergyman : one of the Kentish rectors."

" Well I am glad you are in it. Good day."

" Good day, Lady Avon. Home, James," he added to the postilion.

Mr. Baumgarten paid his first visit to Avon House on the following day. Lady Grace was alone in the room when he entered, and it happened that she knew nothing of his expected visit. It startled her to emotion. However she may have striven to drive away the remembrance of Ryle Baumgarten, she had not done it ; and her feelings of anger, her constantly indulged feelings of jealousy, had only helped to keep up her passion. Her countenance flushed crimson, and then grew deadly pale.

Mr. Baumgarten took her hand, almost in compassion ; he thought she must be ill. " What has been the matter ? " he inquired.

" The matter ! Nothing," and she grew crimson again. " Is your visit to mamma ? Do you wish to see her ? "

" I am here by appointment with Lady Avon."

The Countess came into the room, and Grace found that his visits were to be frequent.

Did she rebel, or did she rejoice ? Oh, reader, if you have loved as she did, passionately, powerfully, you need not ask. The very presence of one, so beloved, is as the morning light ; at his coming it is as if sunshine burst upon a night of darkness. So had Grace Carmel felt when with Mr. Baumgarten in the time gone by, so did she feel again now ; although he had belonged to another.

From that day they saw a great deal of each other, and in the quiet intercourse of social life—of invalid life, it may be said, for Lady

Avon's ill health was confirmed—grew more intimate than they had ever been. Lady Grace strove to arm herself against him : she called up pride, anger, and many other adjuncts, false as they were vain, for the heart is ever true to itself, and will be heard. It ended in her struggling no longer : in her giving herself up, once more, to the bliss of loving him unchecked.

Did he give himself up to the same, by way of reciprocity ? Not of loving her : no, it had not come to it : but he did yield to the charm of liking her, of finding pleasure in her society, of wishing to be more frequently at Avon House. He had loved his wife, but she was dead and buried : and there are very few men indeed who remain constant in heart to a dead love, especially if she has been his wife. The manners of Grace possessed naturally great fascination : what then must they not have been, when in intercourse with one she idolized ? She was more quiet than formerly, more confidential, more subdued ; it was a change as if she had gone through sorrow, and precisely what was likely to tell upon the heart of Ryle Baumgarten. But there was no acting now in Lady Grace ; she was not striving to gain him, as she had once done : she simply gave herself up to the sweet dream she was indulging, and let results take their chance. Mr. Baumgarten may be forgiven if he also began to feel that existence might yet be made into something pleasant as a dream. Thus the time passed on to May.

The Honourable and Reverend Wilfred Elliotsen, claiming a dead earl for a father and a live earl for a brother, was not, of course, a light whose beams could be hid under a bushel, more particularly as the live earl was in the cabinet. It therefore surprised no one that when the excellent old Bishop of Barkaway was gathered to his fathers, and a lucky canon, who held one of the best livings in the kingdom, was promoted to his mitre, Mr. Elliotsen should step into the canon's shoes, rich living and all. This left Great Whitton vacant. As luck, or the opposite, chanced to have it, Lord Avon was on a few days' visit to his mother when Mr. Elliotsen received his appointment.

"Don't put such another as Elliotsen into Great Whitton, Henry," observed the Countess to her son, "or we shall have the parish in rebellion."

"He has not succeeded in pleasing his flock yet, then ?" remarked his lordship.

"No. They have put up with him because they had to do it ; they could not help themselves. On fine days many of them have gone over to Little Whitton. There is no help for these cases, you see, Henry ; sometimes it strikes me as being very like a wrong which the Church ought to rectify. I suppose you think me shamefully unorthodox for saying so."

"Indeed I don't, mother ; I like people to enjoy their own opinions : and I'm not sure that I don't think with you. If I had

any decided views as to what church I went to, or what parson I sat under—which I've not at present," added the Earl, with a cough—"I might not be pleased if a man holding adverse and unwelcome notions were thrust upon me. We must consider the Scotch ways preferable, I take it: they elect their own pastor, I believe."

"After a trial of his preaching," assented Lady Avon.

"And our plan is no end of bother to the patron when a good living falls in," continued the young man. "Seventeen letters I have had this blessed morning, applications direct or indirect, for Great Whitton. I have half a mind to reply through the *Times*, and make one answer do for the lot."

Lady Avon raised herself from her sofa, and looked at her son. "Do you want a candidate, Henry?"

He looked at her. "Scarcely, mother: with seventeen bold applications, and seventy more behind them, peeping out."

"Henry, if you have no one especially in view, let me name the Rector *this* time. It will perhaps be one of my lasts requests to you."

"I'm sure I don't much care, mother. I had heartburning enough over it last time, every man but the successful one thinking himself ill-used. If your mind's set upon any fellow, I'll give it him at once; glad to do it; and send off a stereotyped answer to my correspondents: 'Very sorry; living's given: wish I had heard of your excellent merits earlier.'"

"Then give it to Mr. Baumgarten. He is a deserving man, Henry; he will restore peace to the parish; and as a preacher few excel him."

Lord Avon laughed a little as he sat down to face the sofa.

"Why, mother, Baumgarten is the very man I had in my own mind. I thought by your preamble you must have fixed on someone else. I would rather he had it than any other parson in the world. I can tell you that the smart the last contretemps brought me lingers yet. Let it be Baumgarten: we owe him a recompense."

And that very day the Earl, afraid, possibly, of fresh interference, personally offered Great Whitton to Mr. Baumgarten, and shook hands on its acceptance.

The news was soon made known. Great Whitton, with its nine hundred a-year and its handsome Rectory, was presented to the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten. The churchwardens threw up their hats, and looked in at the school-house to tell the mistress that the girls might unsew those white symbols from the back tails of their cloaks. That same evening Mr. Baumgarten presented himself at Avon House. Grace Carmel was standing amidst the rose-trees: she liked to linger in the open air at the dusk hour, to watch the stars come out, and to think of *him*. But that she wore a white dress, he might not have distinguished her in the fading twilight. He left the open path to join her.

"It is a late visit, Lady Grace, which I must apologise for; I was

called out to a sick friend as I was starting, and detained an hour," he said ; "but I could not resist coming to say a word of gratitude to Lord Avon. He did not allow time for it this morning when he called upon me ; went away the moment he told me I was to have the living, as if he wished to avoid my thanks."

He felt the hand, he had taken in greeting, tremble within his, and he saw her raise her other hand hastily and lay it on her bosom, as if she would still its beating. She answered him with a smile.

"Your visit will not accomplish its object, Mr. Baumgarten, for my brother is gone. He left before dinner upon some matter of urgent business in town. Mamma says she is very glad that you will be nearer to us."

"Perhaps I have to thank you for this, as much as Lord Avon," he said.

"No ; no, indeed : it was mamma who spoke to Henry ; or he to her ; they arranged it between them. I—I ——"

"What?" he whispered.

"I did not speak to him," she continued, filling up the pause of hesitation. "That is all I was going to say."

But Mr. Baumgarten could not fail to detect how agitated she was, and as he stood there, looking at her downcast face in the twilight, the remembrance of certain words of his wife's came rushing over him, and he felt a sudden conviction that Lady Grace *had* loved him—and that she loved him still. He forgot what had been ; he forgot the one who had been once his idol ; and he yielded himself unreservedly to the fascination which had of late been stealing over his spirit.

Her trembling hands were busy with the rose-trees, though she could scarcely distinguish buds from leaves. Mr. Baumgarten took one hand, and placing it within his own arm, bent down his face until it was on a level with hers. "Grace," he whispered, "have we misunderstood each other?"

She could not speak, but her lips turned white with her emotion. It was the hour of bliss she had so long dreamt of.

"Grace," he continued, in a tone of impassioned tenderness, "have we loved each other through the past, and did I mistake my feelings? Oh, Grace, my best-beloved, forgive me ! Forgive my folly and my blindness !"

With a plaintive cry of satisfied yearning, such as may escape from one who suddenly finds a long-sought-for resting-place, Grace Carmel turned to his embrace. He held her to him ; he covered her face with his impassioned kisses, as he had once covered Edith Dane's ; he whispered all that man can whisper of poetry and tenderness. She was silent from excess of bliss, but she felt that she could have lain where she was for ever.

"You do not speak," he jealously said ; "you do not tell me that you forgive the past. Grace, say but one word ; say you love me !"

"Far deeper than another ever did," she murmured. "Oh, Ryle ! I will be more to you than she can have been !"

Recollection, prudence—perhaps for her sake—began to dawn over Mr. Baumgarten : he smoothed the signs of emotion from his brow : he would have put her away.

"Grace, pardon my folly," he implored. "I am doing wrong ; I have forgotten myself strangely. Forgive, forgive me ! It is madness to aspire to you. I have no right to seek to drag you down from your rank to my level."

But she clung to him still. "Your own wife, your own dear wife," she whispered. "Ryle ; Ryle ; only love me for ever."

It is a fact—and the longer we live the more surely it must impress itself upon us—that uninterested spectators see more of what goes on around us than we see ourselves. Never had Lady Avon seen or suspected aught of the case regarding her daughter and Mr. Baumgarten.

The revelation came upon her with a blow. It was Grace who, calling up her courage, imparted it. Lady Avon went into a storm of anger ; and then, finding her commands and reproaches produced no impression upon Grace for good, wrote in haste for Lord Avon.

An awful thing had happened, and he must come without a moment's delay, was what she curtly wrote : and the word "awful," be it understood, was in those days used only in its extreme sense, not, as at present, in ridiculous lightness. Lord Avon obeyed, swearing a little at the contrariety of mundane affairs. His urgent business in town was that of witnessing the first appearance of a new singer at the opera, and this mandate stopped it.

"Ah," remarked Lord Avon, as he sat listening to his mother's tale, "I can now understand that past capricious trick Grace played. She must even then have been in love with Baumgarten."

"Yes," said Lady Avon, angrily ; "and she must have found out that he was going to marry Edith Dane. We cannot allow it to go on, Henry."

His lordship twirled his light brown whiskers ; rather a habit of his when in a puzzle.

"I don't see how we can stop it," he presently said.

"But it must be stopped."

"How will you do that, mother?"

"*You* must do it. You are the head of the family."

Lord Avon laughed lightly. "Grace has always wound me round her little finger. Why, mother, I have no authority over her whatever ; if I attempted to exercise any, she would simply set me at defiance."

Lady Avon had no whiskers to twirl, but she pulled at her cap-strings. What her son said was true.

"Grace has had her own way ever since she could toddle, you

know, mother ; you and my father took care of that. *I* didn't get it half as much. My opinion is, she will take it now. She is her own mistress, and she has her own fortune—what little it is."

"She cannot marry without your consent ; your father made that proviso in his will, remember."

"Yes she can, mother. Before she was of age she could not do so ; she can now."

Lady Avon sat in bitter mortification. "What is to be done ?" she asked.

"The best plan, so far as I can see, will be to put a good face upon it, and let her have him."

"Nonsense, Henry !"

"It is not so bad as it might have been," went on the earl. "Baumgarten is a gentlemanly fellow, and of fairly good descent. You like him much, I believe."

"Good gracious !" retorted Lady Avon. "It is one thing to like a man as a clergyman, and quite another thing to like him as a husband for one's daughter. How absurd you are, Henry !"

"Look here, mother mine : if you can point out any feasible way of putting a stop to the affair, I'll try to do it. *I* don't see any."

"Why, he is a widower ! He has a child !"

"Grace knows that. He is uncommonly good-looking."

Lady Avon's face was full of distressed perplexity. "Last autumn Lord Chrisley came here with proposals of marriage to her, and she refused him. In spite of all I could say, she refused him absolutely."

"Had got Baumgarten in her head, I expect," said the earl, carelessly. "Chrisley's a good fellow ; I should like him to have had Grace."

"Can't you talk to her ?"

"I will talk to her—if she'll let me," assented Lord Avon. "It will do no good : rely upon that, mother. If Grace has made her mind up to have Baumgarten, Baumgarten she'll have. And I do think that the pleasantest plan we can pursue will be to sanction it."

"Do you approve of him for your brother-in-law, pray ?"

"No. Not altogether. My sister and your daughter ought to have made a very different match. But you know what Grace is, mother : and circumstances alter cases."

It was the plan pursued. It was the only pleasant plan, as Lord Avon had put it, that could be pursued. For Lady Grace held to her own will, and opposition would only have created scandal. And the ears of Great Whitton were regaled with the astounding news that their new and popular Rector was on the eve of marriage with that beautiful and haughty girl who had latterly lived amidst them, the daughter of the Countess of Avon.

(To be continued.)

BETWEEN TWO WORLDS.

I DO not pretend to account for the incidents I am about to relate ; that they occurred simply and absolutely as I tell them, is enough. If I find readers, let each for him or herself, form and propound theories.

The shadow of the cross had fallen darkly across my life's pathway, and to recruit my over-strained nerves I had drawn myself apart from the home and social circle for awhile, and gone to spend the early summer months in a quiet little village on the East coast. I had longed for solitude, but found ere long, that too much of it was not good. I was in danger of growing morbid through too much inward looking during those times when pen and books were of necessity laid aside.

I ran over in my own mind my list of friends and acquaintances. For which of them should I send ? The society of which one of them could I best endure ? One after another they were recalled and discarded. One knew too much, another too little ; this one was too frivolous, that too grave ; till at last I reached the very outer rim of my circle of acquaintances, and then a face flashed across my vision. It was that of a young girl I had only twice met casually. Something in her face, however, bright and beautiful as it was, had attracted me ; and now the memory of it seemed to promise a companionship just sympathetic enough to respect my darker moods, without seeking to comprehend them. I felt certain that her nature was a deeper and fuller one than is possessed by young girls generally, and at once resolved to ask her to visit me.

I wrote to her by the next post. " I can only offer you the society of a lonely invalid ; but if you are a lover of nature, as all aspirants in art should be, I promise you a coast worth studying, and a glory of sea and sky that might well fill any artist's soul."

In due course her answer reached me : " I will come."

On the day fixed for her arrival, the wind had a touch of east in it, and I was afraid to venture out. I sent the car to meet her at the station, a distance of two miles away.

It was a brilliant May-day, but cold, as May-days are apt to be on that breezy coast. A bright fire glowed in my little parlour grate, a kettle was singing on the hob, and on the gipsy-table by my low basket chair my quaint little tea-cups were set for afternoon tea. The golden sunshine lay in one broad deceptive glow without, where the garden was all golden-green in the fullness of its new leafage. The deep window was filled with ferns, and amongst the fronds was a canary-cage, whose little inmate chirped and trilled a low song, soft as only the notes of the hen bird are.

So I waited the return of the car, and as I waited, conjured up my last impression of the face expected. Blue eyes with laughter in them, lips that curved archly, a transparent skin, and a broad brow about which curled bright auburn hair.

Sounds of arrival broke up my vision. I looked out across the ferns. Yes, the car was at the gate. A slight figure in black descended. My eyes took in at a glance the unchanged contour, the gleam of the auburn hair beneath the black felt hat with the feather border. Ere long the quietude of my little room would be broken with merry chatter.

This thought came reassuringly and almost unconsciously. Life had proved so changeful to me that, since the receipt of her laconic epistle accepting my invitation, I had been now and again tormented with the fear that my expectations would no more be realised in this case than they had been in others.

It was not until our first greetings had been exchanged, her hat removed, and she was seated in the low chair opposite to me across the hearth, that I realised there had been more truth in my fear than in the assurance. The same, certainly, in outward seeming, none but perceptions sharpened as mine were could have detected a difference. On whomsoever the discipline of the cross falls, it gives a divining rod which never fails to detect in others the thorns that compose its crown.

She—but for convenience I will give her a name. She was like mignonette—unobtrusive, but fragrant—then Mignonette it shall be. And I? Well, before many days had passed she learnt to call me Sunshine—I, whose life seemed bounded with a horizon blacker than the blackest night. But she said I was to *her* as sunshine in a shady place.

We were at first like comparative strangers; but as the twilight fell we drew nearer, each to the soul of the other.

We passed from the current literary and artistic topics to the borderland of our mutual acquaintances, finding out where our several social circles touched and intermingled. As we talked, the knowledge was forced upon me more and more that her gaiety was less spontaneous than it had been; that there was evident effort in her sallies of wit; and now and then she lapsed altogether into silence, which she left me to break.

Finally, when I touched upon the sudden death, under very sad circumstances, of one I believed we both knew slightly, her replies became so cold and constrained that I was conscious of a sense of disappointment, believing her to be wanting in sympathy.

The circumstances were these:—A young medical student, son of a French physician exiled at the *Coup d'état*, who had given evidence of more than ordinary genius, had broken down in health through too much devotion to study, just when, by his indomitable energy, he had overcome the obstacles which fate had placed in his path, and seemed

to have forced open the gates of fortune, so that a brilliant career lay before him. As a good opportunity offered, he was strongly urged by friends and medical advisers to spend the severer part of the winter in the West Indies. On the eve of his departure he sent me one of his spirited little notes, saying jokingly :

"I am going to take a run in a friend's boat, so this is good-bye for the present. If I come back, you will hear from me. If I do not——"

The next news that reached me was that the short projected voyage had ended in a longer one. Three days out from England, he was found, towards evening, dead in his berth. Complaining of sea-sickness he had gone to lie down. It was supposed that he had administered to himself a dose of chloroform as a panacea for the sickness, and returned the cork to the bottle from which he had taken it, insecurely, so that the motion of the vessel had jerked it out. A large bottle belonging to his medicine chest was found empty by his side, and the cork on the floor. He had devoted much time and labour to the study of the effects of chloroform ; it was a subject that had always had especial fascination for him, and one of his last duties, before leaving England, had been to deliver a lecture upon it, with experiments. So this promising young life was ended before the completion of his twentieth year. I had grieved over his premature death, believing that his life, had it been spared, would have been a life of great usefulness. He had had some correspondence upon a question of faith, being a little too much inclined to believe that science was opposed to religion. I felt the same interest in him that an elder sister would have done, and tried to help him in his search after truth.

The firelight had died down as the twilight had deepened. My little canary had gone to roost, and, with no head visible, sat like a ball of feathers on her perch. The moon had risen above the low gabled roof of the farmhouse opposite, and its silver beams stole over the ivied garden wall, in through the casement, and across the feathery fern-fronds, to mottle with shining patches the faded old carpet. I was resting, with hands folded beneath my head, on the chintz-covered couch under the window. The sadness of this broken life, and the supposed lack of sympathy in my listener, silenced me.

Suddenly, through the stillness of the moonlit room, there sounded a low wail, the unmistakable cry of a heart broken with grief. Then something dark crossed the light and flung itself down in a heap by my side, and a voice half choked with tears broke forth :

"I did not mean to tell you—I did not mean to let any one know, now that it is all over—but—but—if he had come back from that voyage, I was to have been his wife."

Again there was silence—a silence so deep that the faint sigh of the night wind, outside among the leaves, was audible. There are times when no language can express our thoughts, and this was one

of them. My heart was full, but only the tritest commonplaces reached my lips. I drew Mignon within my arms, I caressed her quietly, but could think of no more comforting words than : "Poor child ! poor child !"

It had taken me so by surprise—for I had never suspected that anything more than the most casual acquaintanceship existed between them. The idea soon familiarised itself, as all natural things do.

"Tell me all about it, Mignon ; I am bewildered."

She lifted her head ; I saw her dry eyes glitter in the moonlight. She was so new to her sorrow, as yet, that its magnitude absorbed her.

"You mean, when I first heard what had happened ? I had taken Cecile, my youngest sister, up to London. We were at the old place, you know, where I boarded during my art studentship. We had been out all day, taking Mrs. Brown to chaperone us : I had been showing Cecile some of the sights. When we came back I found a letter awaiting me. It was from Louis, his brother. I did not think it could be important, and I opened it before them all. Its contents seemed to stun me. I don't think I realised their import, or believed that it could be true, for I went on laughing and talking, only it seemed to me as though it was someone else talking, and not I. The others knew nothing about Arnold, and I must not let them know ; this was my only conscious thought. There were obstacles in the way of our engagement, you see, and my parents had not yet given their full consent. At last I said I was tired and would go to my room. Cecile shared it with me, and until she was fast asleep I could not examine every word of Louis' note ; I could not try to make myself believe its contents. It is strange, don't you think, that the tears would not come then, or since ? I think some things sink too deeply for tears ; they lie hidden and work slowly ; but they change everything—the earth, and the heavens, and life, and one's very tasks and pleasures. I do not care to say much about it, but I know that nothing can ever be the same to me again. And yet—is it not strange ?—even my mother is comforted because I do not take it to heart. She thinks I have 'got over it nicely,' as if I had had the measles."

Bit by bit, not that evening, not in one talk, but in many, I drew from her all there was to tell, the whole of the short sad story—probing her sorrow to its depths that I might the more effectually pour in the balm of healing. I learnt, amongst other things, that although she did not make moan, as other girls would have done under the circumstances, she had never slept except in short fitful snatches, since that night when she had had to keep her trouble from Cecile. Her nights were spent in feverish questions that were sapping the very foundations of her faith, and doubling her sorrow by rendering its remedy null and void.

Mignon had been diligently instructed by careful parents and

teachers in the somewhat narrow creed of Evangelicalism. She had been taught not so much to love God with the trustful dependence of a child, as to fear Him, in the common acceptation of the word fear; and to dread the Hell to which He had doomed so large a proportion of His creatures.

"It is not because death has taken him from me that I am troubled," she said, with a drawing together of her brows and a tightening of the muscles about her mouth; "but that I must either give up my hopes of Heaven, or relinquish all thought of meeting him again."

"But where is the necessity for so cruel an alternative? You must tell me more, Mignon, for I do not see it in the same light that you do."

"Do you not?" with a sudden gleam in her eyes, which, however, faded directly. "You know that he was not a Christian?"

"That was his misfortune, and not his fault. I know that he was born and educated in the Jewish faith; still that is not to say that he would always have remained a Jew. And even if he had done so—the Jews, after all, were the chosen race of God. We are all God's children, my dear; Jews as well as Christians."

"Arnold would have become a Christian if he had lived," she said; but in the hopeless tone of one who had carefully weighed and considered every argument, and discarded them all as untenable.

"On his last Sunday in England," she continued, "we went together to Westminster Abbey. It was the first time he had ever been in a Christian place of worship, and he was much impressed by the service. He promised me, then, to give all the time that he could while he was away to the study of Christianity. He took Paley's Evidences, and other books that were recommended, and was quite resolved to come back to me a Christian. I know he would have found the Truth, because he would have been so honest and thorough in his search. Oh, if it had only been granted to him to live a few months longer!"

Her face fell; a wave of agony passed over her.

"Mignon," I said, taking her hands firmly in mine, and speaking distinctly, "if I did not know that you are blinded by heart-sickness, I should accuse you of want of faith and knowledge. Believe me, you are making a barrier which does not exist."

"What do you mean? How?" she cried, startled.

I reached my little Bible, and pointed out to her the passage in Corinthians:—"If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not."

She took the book and read the verse with avidity. Her eyes dilated, the crimson rushed to her cheek, the veins in her temples were swollen and throbbing. She went over the words several times, weighing them more slowly until the larger hope in them sank like a refreshing dew upon her fevered heart and soul. She gave me one

mute glance and crept away. Later, I stole up to the door of her room, and, listening, heard her quietly crying; not hopelessly, passionately, but as one cries when tears come as the natural outlet of the over-charged heart. It is best to let such tears have their course, because each one brings relief. So I left her in the keeping of Him who can bind up every bruised and broken heart.

At tea-time she came down, and in her face was the light of sunshine after rain.

It had grown to be our habit, during those evenings that the moon was approaching the full, not to have the lamp brought in until the moon-rays had banished the last of the twilight shadows, and asserted their sovereignty.

To-night Mignon was glad at heart, and blessed me fervently for the comfort to which I had led her. Words were few after this. She just nestled to me, and grew still in the contemplation of the happy certainty that hereafter she would meet her young lover, and learn from his own lips how the Truth had been revealed to him.

I, too, was silent, letting my thoughts wander as my fingers moved caressingly over her brow and cheek, continuously, and almost mechanically. How long there had been silence I hardly know, when Mignon drew herself together with a little shiver, lifted herself, then stretched out her arms. The moon shone full on her face, her eyes were fast closed, her features wore a look of rapture.

"Why, Arnold! is it you, dear? They said you were dead—— This is not death! I see you, I feel you; it is your very self."

Was she sleeping, dreaming?

In an instant it occurred to me that the touch of my fingers must have been mesmeric. I had been familiar with the ordinary manifestations of this power all my life, but had never attempted to exercise it, or supposed that I could do so.

Astonished beyond all expression, I watched and listened.

"You cannot stay? But I may go back with you just a little way, and we can talk as we go. Here is Sunshine, who helped me to find you. You cannot speak to her? Wait one moment, then, whilst I explain to her. Sunshine, dear, will you wait for me under this tree? I will come back directly, and then I will tell you what I may not stay to say now."

This was said breathlessly; then she seemed to wander away with him, talking as friends talk who have met unexpectedly after a long parting. I could only follow her imperfectly, for her sentences became fragmentary, and many of her words were spoken in answer to others that seemed to come from him, to which she gave me no clue, save by what was responsive in her own.

I gathered that she was walking with him in a country whose loveliness exceeded anything she had seen before, for now and then came ejaculations at the beauty by which they were surrounded, wonder at

the birds, and flowers and grass, which, she reminded him, he used to call *le tapis de la nature*. She questioned him about his life, his experiences in the new world which he had entered, and seemed to receive assurances that more than satisfied her. In the midst of her gladness suddenly came a sadder tone. "Must you go? Already? Can you not stay one moment longer?"

She had evidently to school herself to submission; then came the agony of parting. She watched him go away, then drooped and was silent until she seemed to find me again, sitting under the tree.

I spoke to her then, as my shadow self. She was still under the strange influence.

"You have seen Arnold?"

"Yes; was it not good? He was allowed to come, just to tell me that all is well. But he could not stay. He is busier even than he used to be; he has all to learn, you know."

"All what, Mignon?"

"I cannot tell you. I do not know—it is all so different there. He does not understand either, at present; but he sees more than we can."

"How is that?"

"Do not ask me; I cannot explain." The troubled look came back to her face. "Shall we go, Sunshine?"

I made reverse passes across her brow, I blew upon her eyes.

"Wake up, Mignon."

A few seconds passed, then the heavy lids were lifted. She shivered, drew her hand across her brow, and cast a startled, enquiring glance round the room.

"I—I—thought Arnold was here."

"You have been asleep, and perhaps dreaming."

She still looked bewildered and doubtful.

"It was so real. But we were not here, in this room. No, I went to him. Ah! now I remember; there was sunshine, and flowers, and we talked—— Oh, could it have been *only* a dream?"

The pathos in her voice went to my heart. Who can tell? We know so little. We cannot even say what are the experiences we call dreams. And who shall determine when reality ends and the illusion begins?

One thing had been revealed to me: that I possessed the power to soothe her restless nerves, and to induce the sleep which had been banished from her pillow for so long. I had exercised it unconsciously; whether I could exercise it at will remained to be seen.

"Mignon, it was undoubtedly the touch of my fingers that sent you to sleep. You have heard of mesmerism?"

She laughed.

"Yes, but I don't believe in it. Do you?"

"It is easy to disbelieve a thing one knows nothing about."

She looked at me enquiringly.

"I believe the next thing you say will be that you are a mesmerist. And, after that, if you declare yourself to be a spiritualist, I shall not be astonished."

"Mesmerist, or no mesmerist, you must let me try, after you are in bed to-night, whether my touch will again bring sleep."

After a little debate, during which I discovered that mesmerism was first cousin to witchcraft in her mind, it was decided for me to try my experiment. It was a great proof of her growing love and faith that she should submit to me in this.

I lingered over my preparations for bed that night. They were only half accomplished when her voice came to me across the little lobby that divided our rooms.

"I am ready, Sunshine."

In dressing-gown and slippers, candle in hand, I crossed to her room.

Her face was white and worn as it lay on the pillows, but her eyes were bright and restless.

"I am sure I shall not sleep," she declared.

I sat down by her side in silence, and began to pass my fingers lightly over her brow as before.

"There is to be no talking," I said.

Barely a minute or two had passed when her eye-lids drooped; she lifted them the next instant and darted a little glance up into my face. My grave eyes held hers; then I saw the light fade, a mist replaced it, then again the lids fell, and, in a little while, her deep regular breathing told me she was fast asleep. I stayed my fingers and watched. All was still. She was sinking deeper and deeper into a restful unconsciousness. I bowed my head in silent, grateful acknowledgment of the power that had been lent me to heal and restore; then left her to go to my own bed.

"Ay, but ye're no canny," was Mignon's greeting to me the next morning. "Is it the Scotch blood in you that gave you the power you exercised last night? Can you believe it, Sunshine, I slept, and never wakened till the sun peeped in?"

That evening, in the moon-light, she crept to the side of my couch again, and lifted my fingers to her brow. I yielded to the mute entreaty, and, once more, she passed through the gates of sleep into that mysterious world, concerning which we surmise so much, but know so little. If the purpose of this sketch were to lift the veil which divides our denser life from it, I could fill many pages with what I gathered from her unconscious utterances, which suggested infinitely more than they actually revealed.

It grew to be a custom that she should have, or seem to have, through my offices, this short interview every evening with her dead lover. Its duration was always limited; time was given to him to con-

verse with her, which must not be exceeded. When she awoke, she always recalled, with more or less difficulty, what had passed between them. Sometimes I gave her messages to take from me to him, concerning our past correspondence, and some of the questions we had touched upon therein; and, invariably, she brought me a reasonable and most probable answer.

Only once did she fail to find him, but the next evening he explained how he had been prevented coming to her as usual. Another evening, when the eyes with which she saw into that world, were opened, her earthly ones being sealed, she was dazzled by the brilliancy of the light with which she was surrounded. She could see nothing for a time but just this effulgence.

Sometimes I tried to draw from her explicit accounts of the scenes upon which she seemed to enter, but words failed her; our earthly language seemed inadequate to describe such Heavenly visions. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man," is the best epitome of that which cannot be realised with our present limited capacities.

They who cultivate their spiritual faculties, however, may now and again catch more than a glimmer of those things in the things that are; for the terrestrial world, is in so many ways, a mirror to the celestial. It is not the lost kingdom of Satan, filled only with the ugliness and wretchedness of sin: but the image of the Heavenly gone astray—the prodigal who has wandered afar; but the days when, like him, it ate husks with the swine, are over and gone; it is far advanced now on its journey back to the Father.

At first there was no doubt that these interviews, real or imaginary, brought unspeakable comfort to poor little Mignon's bereaved heart. And, as through my nightly exercised mesmeric gift, sleep regularly visited her pillow, health and spirits were improved also.

The joy of being allowed to comfort her in this way seemed, for a time, to lift me above all minor considerations, but then came the reaction which so certainly follows all highly-strung feeling. I became conscious of an increasing lassitude, and sometimes a nervous irritability in the presence of Mignon that I could only with the greatest difficulty restrain. I made an effort to curtail our nightly talks. The evenings were brighter and milder now, so I prolonged our rambles on the shore, returning to occupy the twilight with a prosaic meal. The moon was on the wane, so there was no temptation to sit through the dusky light and await its rising. But again and again I was led by Mignon's appealing glance, and my own eager thirst, to penetrate the shadows which veiled from me the world of light she seemed to enter through the means of that mesmeric sleep.

I felt, too, that the exercise of this power was giving me an influence over her, even in her waking hours, that it might not be well for any person to possess over another.

She grew more and more subservient to every glance and touch of

mine. I could at will put a spell upon her which she was powerless to resist. By merely concentrating my mind I have, for experiment, caused her to fall asleep as she sat with her back to me, reading.

I became troubled and perplexed with the problem that presented itself to me. How far was I justified in continuing to gratify the longing, which became daily more irresistible to her, to cross the boundary of the two worlds?

As the days went by I observed that her interest in our actual surroundings decreased proportionately. She had brought easels, and sketch-books, and colour materials with her, meaning to take away many a bit of cliff and shore; but her art had lost its charm, her sketch-books were unopened, her brushes lay idle. She passed through her days in a dream-like manner, and only seemed to begin to be awake when my fingers had sealed her eyes. No slave could ever have waited upon my looks and words more abjectly than she did. She knew the very instant when, pen or books laid aside, I should be least able to resist her entreaty. The less alive she seemed to our absolute existence, the more vivid did her perceptions become of Arnold's surroundings.

She never could take me far with her, but always left me at some point to await her return; and from the moment that she seemed to leave me, was perfectly unconscious of my presence.

One evening as we sat late in the lamplight, and she had gone from me in this manner, she came back, her face beaming with ecstasy.

"Sunshine, oh, Sunshine! he knows all now, for he has been with the Master."

"He has seen Jesus?"

She bowed her face over her clasped hands.

"He has both seen and spoken with Him."

Gratitude, love, joy unspeakable seemed to fill her soul.

Then she flung herself sobbing into my arms.

"Oh, Sunshine, let us join him. It is so hard to stay here, so impossible!"

Sobbing still, she awoke, and the rapture fled in tears as the reality forced itself upon her.

That night my soul was bitterly exercised. What harm was I doing? Ought I not, for Mignon's sake and my own, to form an iron resolution, and keep it in spite of every urgent entreaty, to put away from us the exercise of a power that was unfitting us for the fulfilment of the duties of this life? I spread the question, and the doubt, where I had laid so many other difficulties.

The answer was sent me without delay.

The next morning's post brought a letter summoning Mignon home; her mother was not well and wanted her.

Mignon made the announcement with a face of blank dismay.

"You must go, Mignon."

"I—must—go," she repeated mechanically ; but her face became ashen-grey, her hands shook.

It was too late for her to take the morning train that day, the only one by which she could get through ; she must start on the following one. The prospect of these few hours' unavoidable delay gave her apparent relief.

"There is still this evening, only this one evening. Sunshine, *how* shall I live without him and you ?"

A passionate outburst followed, only stilled by the immediate necessity for exertion, which in despair I enforced.

That evening I received her back from her last interview with Arnold, broken-hearted, but submissive. She wept wearily in my arms for a time, but there was no more rebellion in her tears than in those of a child over-mastered by a will stronger than its own.

If I were to attempt to analyse my feelings as I drove back alone from the station the next morning, I should be compelled to admit that a sense of relief was uppermost. Now, at last, I could calmly face the difficulty that had crept about me so gradually, and involved me in a maze of doubts and perplexities.

Before I had found the full solution I sought, however, came a characteristic letter from Mignon.

"I am here, and you are there, and Arnold is—where I cannot find him. It is all dark, and dull, and dreary. And I do so dread the long grey years that lie before me."

I schooled myself to write what I meant, in all kindness, to be a strengthening tonic ; bidding her close her eyes to the long years, and be satisfied to take each duty of each single day as it arose. I dared not express even a portion of the sympathy I felt for her ; she needed something more stimulating than sympathy now. Were they even seemingly unkind, those letters I sent week after week ? I hope no more so than is the bracing wind off a breezy moorland.

In due time my way was made clear. I took it unfalteringly.

My stay at the sea-side came to its appointed end. I returned to my home and duties.

A whole year passed by before any opportunity came for Mignon and me to meet. I happened to be in their neighbourhood then, and resolved to pay them a short visit.

I wrote Mignon to this effect, and in the prospect of so shortly seeing her, alluded, for the first time for many months, to those evenings by the sea.

"Possibly the power I exercised then was only permitted for that especial time, and for a purpose ; I may not possess it still. But whether I do or not, I have determined never to exercise it again. You believed, and I am still unable to divest myself of the same belief, that by means of it you were able to hold communion with the spirit of your lost Arnold. Up to a certain point, and under the

sad circumstances of your recent bereavement, there was comfort in this thought. But beyond this point there was danger, and I am convinced there would be still greater danger in continuing to indulge it. You see, dear child, we are put into this world to do a certain work in it, and this work can only be done by our living in the world, and in the midst of its duties. If we withdraw ourselves from them, may-be we miss opportunities we can never regain, and lay up for ourselves eternal regret. To trust and to obey are the lessons given us to be learned here. Our life here is a life of faith, not sight, and faith is a belief in things *unseen*. Doubtless there are many things we need to learn that only faith can teach us. I do not think we ought to enter the world your Arnold now inhabits as long as we are in the body, except by the exercise of the faculty of faith. When God wills us to enter we shall be taken out of the body. And even were it lawful I am sure it is anything but advisable, except in especial cases. Stray glimpses through the veil have, as we know, from time to time been permitted, either to or on behalf of doubting Thomases; but happier are they who need no such assurances—who are content to wait God's own time for the veil to be removed. 'Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.' You and I are work-a-day people; you with your brush and I with my pen; we cannot afford to indulge in anything which is likely to unfit us for our work. We see the glimmer of the golden gates at the end of a long and toilsome road, but that road must be traversed in steps; we cannot fly over it on wings. Let us take each step bravely and firmly, looking to the end but not anticipating it."

Mignon met me on my arrival, with a chastened sweetness in her young face, that told me at once she had thought my letter well over, and was prepared to submit to my judgment. Others were present at our meeting; therefore we could interchange nothing but common-places.

It was a large and merry household, and Mignon moved amongst the rest, apart, and yet of them.

After we had separated for the night I listened, and was prepared for her low tap at my door.

"Sunshine," she said, as I admitted her, "you know that I will not question your decision, but do not be angry with me for asking to be allowed to go to him once more to tell him what you say. I should like to hear him confirm your opinion. I feel sure that he will do so, because, when I think of it, it seemed difficult for him sometimes to come to me, and may-be it interfered with his work, as you think it will with ours. Not to-night; you are tired now, and need to go straight to bed; but to-morrow night I will come, if I may."

I could but agree to her petition, thankful that she had yielded so easily and so sweetly.

The next day was full of outward calls upon both time and atten-

tion. As one of so large and busy a family, I almost wondered at Mignon's inner life being so strong and real to her. I noted with relief that she was a very active spring in the domestic machine ; that the delicate little mother rested upon her for many things ; that the boys found her more patient in solving their difficulties than any other sister ; and that the girls went naturally to her for counsel and assistance. She was not closing her heart to the wholesome calls from without. On account of this I more readily lent myself to the gratification of her request.

She came to my room at the time specified, with her sacred purpose in her eyes. I was in bed, she in her dressing-gown. Without a word she sat down beside me, and rested her head in such a position that the brow lay readily under my fingers.

Long after I knew that she had yielded to the influence of my touch she lay so still, with neither speech nor motion, that I began to think the sleep induced was only natural. Then, with a little quivering breath, she said piteously :

"I am here—I have come back to you, Sunshine."

I laid my hand upon her eyes and took the usual means to awaken her. She looked at me, dazed for a moment, as she used to do, then glanced round.

"Well?" I said, interrogatively.

She threw herself down by me, clinging to my neck convulsively.

"You could not find him, Mignon?"

"Yes, yes, I saw him. But we have said good-bye till God calls me to join him. I waited a long time ; it was not easy for him to come to me ; and he says it would be more and more difficult for him to do so, and that it would also interfere with his work. I must never be a hindrance to him ; I told him so."

"And he thinks I am right?"

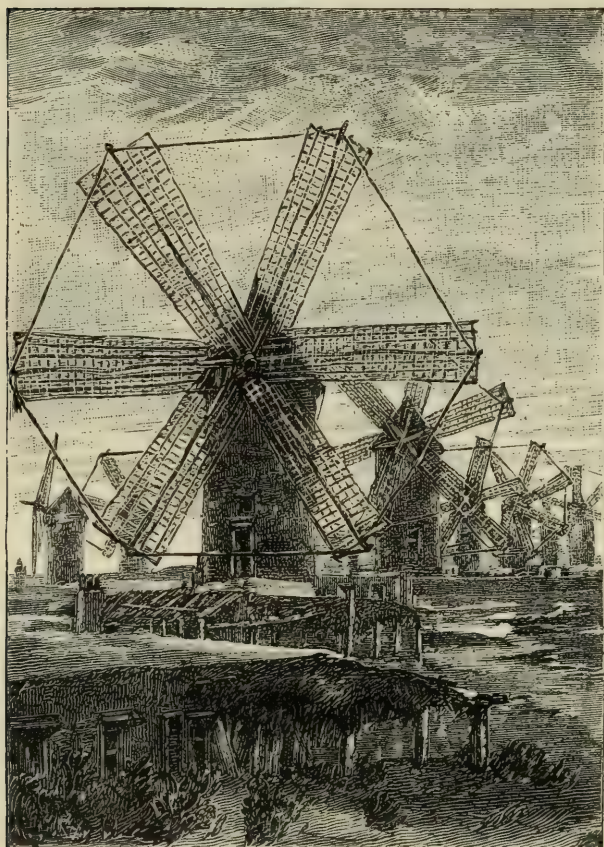
"I told him as much as I could remember of what you wrote to me. Yes, he approves. But, stay ; I believe I can recall his own words :—'We ought not to presume upon the privileges which are sometimes granted to us in an extremity.'"

Mignon has faithfully kept her promise to him and to me. Years have passed, but she has never asked nor sought another meeting. She waits and works and is still the centre of that busy household. Sometimes the question is asked—Will she never marry? My own heart answers in the negative, for all Mignon's love is given to him who still lives—though beyond the veil.



LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



PALMA WINDMILLS.

Palma, Nov. 12, 1886.

MY DEAR E. — I concluded my last letter with the cry of the night watchman ringing in my ears. I have heard *Il Sereno* many times since then, though it is only two nights ago. I am quite sure that none of the Majorcan watchmen sleep at their post. They go through their task with a conscience worthy of a better cause. At regular intervals the cry ascends, melancholy, depressing, but interesting. If you chance to look out of window you will see the solitary figure moving along in the darkness, whilst his lantern throws glimmers of light around

him, and ghostly shadows upon the sleeping houses.

There is something more than a mere old-world feeling in this custom. It almost seems Patriarchal or Scriptural. You remember the burden of Dumah crying to Isaiah out of Seir : " Watchman, what of the night ? Watchman, what of the night ? " And the watchman's reply : " The morning cometh, and also the night. " In the silent night hours, too, if wakeful, it reminds one far more than the sound of bells, of the Tide of Time, which, unlike the ocean, knows no ebbing, no standing still or going back ten degrees ; but, alas, like Tennyson's brook, flows on for ever.

For my own part, I never hear this old watchman without thinking of that last long journey each one has to take ; the last long sleep no earthly watchman will ever again disturb ; the folding of the hands by others when work is done and the silver cord is loosed, and the grass-

hopper is no longer a burden, and the last heart-hunger has ceased with the last heart-beat. "The morning cometh, and also the night."

But these are night thoughts, and it is due to Palma to introduce it to your notice by day.

In truth, of that day and of daylight it need not be ashamed. It is a bright town, possessing marked individuality. Yet in some respects it seems to owe a good deal of this rather to the absence of special features than to their presence. There is, for instance, a certain *repose* about it; perhaps more than there ought to be, for the Majorcan temperament is said to be slow and unenterprising. Scenes found in Naples, or even in the other islands of the Mediterranean—such as Palermo for instance—appear to be undreamed of by the people of Palma. Whether they have special fêtes and occasions when they run riot and go mad, I do not as yet know. I may be able to tell you more about this by and by.

On first approaching Palma from the sea it impresses one very favourably. I told you in my last that it has a certain Eastern appearance, which is not one of its least attractions. All things Eastern have for me, a special charm. They suggest antiquity, eternal sunshine, gorgeous vegetation and luscious fruits; a land flowing with milk and honey; rich in grapes and pomegranates, olive yards and vineyards; great in the pomp and magnificence of ceremonial. And though this last has become, in too many cases, a circumstance of the past, it has left behind its undying halo and glamour.

So Palma especially pleases by its somewhat Eastern atmosphere. Not that it is singular in this respect amongst places not absolutely Eastern. Other islands and towns bear the same character in greater or less degree: Syracuse, Palermo, Malta; though their burning sun and blue skies might alone give them this appearance. The harbour of Malta is far grander and more imposing than that of Palma; but as towns, regarded from the picturesque point of view, the latter has much the advantage. And whilst Palma is full of repose, Malta is the most *unrestful* place I was ever in. Its horrible street cries, echoing, distracting, cease only at three in the morning, to begin again at five. Two comparatively quiet hours out of the twenty-four.

I was out there, you will remember, with Broadley, some time after our Cruise in the Royal Reserve Squadron: during which cruise we all read Sanskrit together, and Pyramid left the maiden all forlorn to pine for love of him in captivity at Arosa Bay (he wears the ashes of the lily to this day in a locket unseen by mortal eye); and Van Stoker went melancholy from writing love letters, and took to playing the flute; and Mr. Jago and Broadley would have died at Tangiers from excesses in lemon tea but for my firmness and perseverance and the courier's interpretations with the singular old chemist.

Broadley excepted, not one of all these was at Malta—they are now scattered to the four ends of the earth—but Broadley was a host in himself: and, fortunately, a host of other friends, civil, military and

naval, made day pleasant and memorable as a set-off against the hideousness of night.

Nothing of all this at Palma. It looks calm and dignified as you approach it, and remains so. The surrounding hills are full of fine forms and undulations, graceful and wavelike. They encircle the town, are not distant, and stretch far away seawards. No doubt, "once upon a time," all this was a part of the mainland of Spain, or Africa, or both, and what is now an island was then a continent. The pier stretches out in a long, straight column of stone, enclosing a good deal of shipping in a small way, with abundance of life, work, and movement on the shores that rise above the splashing blue waters of this tideless sea. To the left, on approaching, is another small harbour with a picturesque lighthouse—the harbour of Porto Pi: and just beyond it, on an elevation, backed by a yet higher range of hills, stands the ancient castle of Bellver, once the residence of the kings of Majorca.

The town rises on slopes, some of which may be called "gentle," while others are steep enough to be trying to all who are not on the side of Pharoah's lean kine. We are; though we hope never to undergo seven years of famine; and hills and valleys to us are equally "laughing."

Moreover, H. C. is nothing if not athletic. I have difficulty in keeping him within bounds. The lightness of the atmosphere is having a corresponding effect upon his temperament. Now he is for floating in the air, for rushing about to all four points of the compass, for jumping over the moon; and now, when night falls, he goes out to contemplate the starry firmament, and comes in and sighs and writes poetry. I have just lighted upon two sets of manuscript: one entitled *Sonnets to Sirius*, the other, *Couplets to the Constellations*. You see he is alliterative. The former begins—

"Star of the winter skies, whose flashing throb and throe,
Excellest e'en the gems I longed for in Bordeaux ——"

But I spare you. The two first lines, as you see, are not at all in Sonnet form: but possibly he intends to set old rules at defiance and invent new ones. This points to originality, which indicates genius, which means immortality. But these thoughts would lead one into regions stupendous. I will stop ere they carry me too far. Like H. C., amongst the constellations I might get out of my depth.

Approaching Palma, the houses stand out a great mass of white and yellow, with flat roofs that are invisible, and others that are slanting and tiled, and toned to the beauty of age. On the flat roofs may be seen great cages for pigeons. The Majorcans are very fond of their pigeons, though I don't know that they hold them sacred. Regularly, day by day, the owner goes up with a long wand, opens the cage door, and sends forth his brood on a "constitutional" flight. You may see them in great numbers, glancing in the sun-

light, bright, beautiful, and flashing against the background of blue sky. Go where you will, pigeons always have a good time of it abroad. These pigeons all know their homes, and return to their respective cages, where they are safely re-fastened, in case any should be seized with a mania for wandering. Everything made secure, the owner retires with his wand, and "the play is o'er."

But most conspicuous of all objects on approaching the harbour is the magnificent cathedral, which rises almost on the very borders of the sea. At first sight, and from the water, it looks more massive than interesting, an impression which disappears on closer inspection. True, it is never elegant or graceful; but it is grand, lofty, and of vast proportions. In colour it is a splendid amber, yellow-toned by the lapse of ages to a shade that I doubt if any other building possesses.

Beyond the cathedral stretch a long line of windmills; the curious windmills of Majorca, of which I enclose you a sketch. They all have six sails instead of four, which gives them a strange and most unfamiliar appearance. In addition to this a mass of ropes and cordage makes the sails look as complicated and intricate as the rigging of a ship.

And then you set foot on shore, and find that life in Palma begins by going up-hill. The sun is casting strong lights and shadows upon streets and houses—lights and shadows far more vivid than one has any conception of in England. And although it is November, you revel in Midsummer heat and brightness, and feel that, whether or not the land flows with milk and honey, it is a favoured land.

I don't think that a first impression of Palma is very striking, but it gains upon you day by day, and this is the happier fate. He who takes the citadel of your heart by storm in twenty-four hours will probably occupy it but a very short time.

Many of the streets are extremely picturesque, with their open balconies, outside shutters, richly ornamented fronts, and beautiful courts. Many are also so narrow that you look down them as through a telescope reversed. The Majorcans, with many of the traits of the Spaniard, do not consider themselves Spanish. I suppose they are not so, any more than the Shetlander is a Scotchman. These insular people, whether of inheritance or by the mere fact of separation, almost invariably become a social and moral law unto themselves. They call their island *Mallorca*, the *ll* liquid, like the French *l* mouillé. It is pronounced in a very soft and gliding manner that has a great charm. Mallorcan is softer and more liquid than the pure Castilian. The languages differ a good deal from each other, though unfortunately both to us are equally unintelligible. But they are easy to learn, and one month's moderate application would certainly make us sufficient masters of the situation.

In many instances, perhaps most instances—as far as my experience has yet gone—the people are interesting and hospitable. Both

men and women are frequently very handsome, but their beauty disappears after the age of thirty. The women are very graceful. They flit down the narrow streets draped in their black mantillas, and you wonder how they manage to walk with a motion which takes one's fancy captive. For the streets are horribly paved with small round stones, that are nothing less than a daily penance, and must jeopardise, and in time distort, the form of the prettiest foot. Yet over these frightful inflictions the women float (their graceful movements often seem more like floating or gliding than mere walking) as easily as they would tread a drawing-room carpet or pirouette down the waxed floor of a ball-room.

In the churches, too, they have their own peculiar way of kneeling: postures full of charm. Last night we went into a church that was preparing for a Requiem service. A religious gloom was spread over the whole interior. An acolyte was lighting a few tapers upon the altar. The church seemed draped with black, so sad and sombre were the walls, so mysterious and obscure the whole effect. One's footsteps faintly echoed upon an invisible pavement.

Here and there in the gloom one discerned a group of female forms draped in black also, kneeling upon the pavement—not in rows, not all together, but in different places, as fancy or chance seemed to dictate. All had that peculiar attitude of resignation, of abandonment, of *repentance*, joined to perfect grace, which is scarcely seen anywhere but amongst the Spanish women. The effect was most poetical and impressive, almost thrilling. I looked at H. C. His gaze was rivetted upon one special form kneeling near the altar under the glimmer of a taper. The light threw a yet deeper shadow upon the pavement beside her. Her profile, dimly outlined, was pure, classical and refined. She had passed her earliest youth, and might have been four or five-and-twenty: the full glory of womanhood.

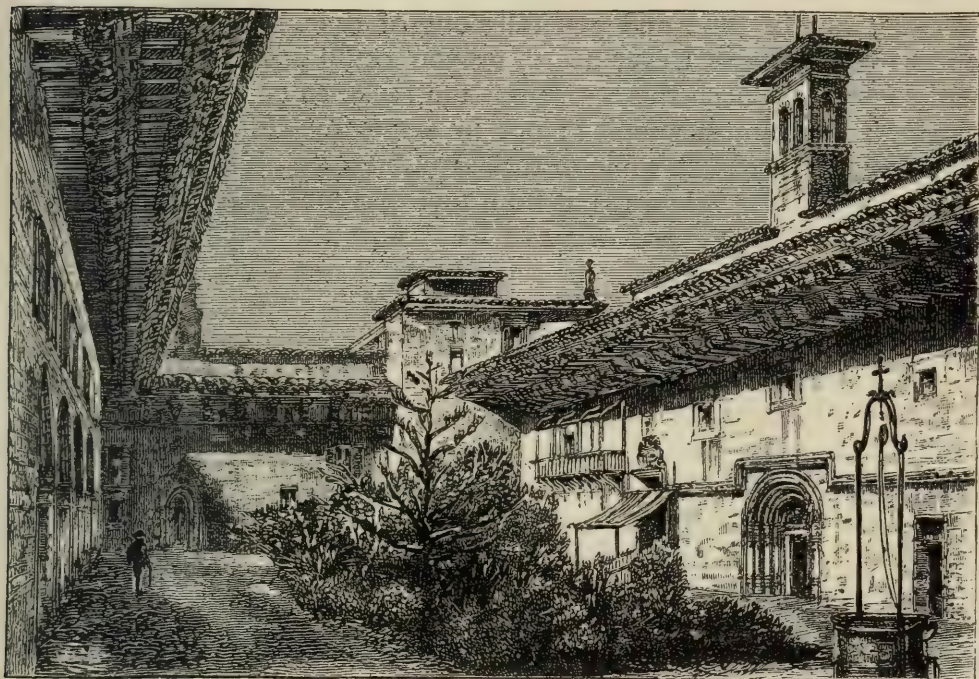
H. C. was deeply impressed, but not at all in a religious sense. He pointed to her, and just at that moment she withdrew from the whitest of left hands, with the quietest, loveliest movement, a silken glove. Below the flash of a diamond ring shone forth the plain gold symbol of marriage. I thought H. C. would have fainted; but he rallied, and whispered in my ear:

"Oh, soul-subduing power, whose charm eternal
Angels might envy from their heights supernal——"

I did not stay for more; I am rather learning to dread these poetic moods. Poetry, we are told, is akin to frenzy; and if I caught his eye in "a fine frenzy rolling," in a country where English, French and German seem equally despised, where even Spanish is not purely spoken and only Mallorcan appears popular, what should I do? I should be glad of some counsel from you in this matter. Or if you know of any skilled leech's prescription which has a soothing effect upon the brain and changes the poetic vein into the practical, perhaps you would be good enough to enclose it in your next letter.

This morning again—as we are on the subject of churches—H. C. was seized with a fancy for drawing. Here, truly, he is in his element, and excels. Going into the court of the old Moorish Palace opposite the cathedral, which we had previously examined and admired, he proceeded to sketch it. So far I accompanied him, saw him install himself and set to work.

It is a charming subject, and I enclose you the result : for with the self-denial of a great mind he places them all at my disposal. Above are deep overhanging eaves, always so picturesque and so especially prominent in Palma architecture. In the centre of the court are



COURT OF THE OLD MOORISH PALACE.

trees, green and tropical. On one side is a picturesque well. At the far end a lovely Gothic gateway.

On the right you will perceive another beautiful doorway, Romanesque, almost Moorish, in design. It leads into the Chapel of Santa Ana, and forms part of the palace. Suddenly, strains of music issued through this doorway : and music for me hath greater power to charm than even poetry for H. C., or the female form bent in picturesque devotion.

(Yet I have noticed, by the way, that these lovely forms, supposed for the time being to be wrapped in mystic visions, will turn and gaze after *our* retreating figures in a manner that in less sacred precincts would be excessively disturbing to one's peace of mind.)

Hearing these strains, I left H. C. calmly sketching (he is impervious to music), crossed the pavement of the courtyard, and passed

through the doorway. It is the small chapel belonging to the Palace of which it forms a part: one of the oldest bits in Palma, and for this reason interesting.

Just now it was interesting for other reasons also. Here, too, a Requiem Mass was going on. Last night we had seen only preparations for the mass. Solemn silence reigned everywhere. The few kneeling figures draped in black were motionless as marble images. The acolyte flitting from candle to candle on the steps of the altar was noiseless as a phantom. This morning there was light and motion and sound. In the gallery a select company of musicians were scraping and blowing away at one of Mozart's Masses. They were all out of tune and generally out of time. It was the finest effect for a *Requiem* I ever heard, or you could possibly imagine. I wished you had been there. It was too much to enjoy alone. Very shortly I was almost weeping; not in sympathy with the mourning, who had appeared like some of those troublesome obituaries in "The Times" *In loving memory*, but from mortification and anger, at such a violation of one's *finer feelings* as I was now undergoing.

And still they came—the fair mourners. When I entered, a goodly number had already assembled; a group of fair women all in sable garments; some with mantillas that will almost make a plain face pretty, a graceless form graceful. Others in bonnets and long veils; but always a *something* suggestive of the drooping penitent; always an absence of *angles*, that so generally offend in other races. Here there was ever, as it seemed, a due regard to the lines and curves of beauty. It is born with some people, and with others no culture or schooling will give it. Just as a man born to chisel the Venus of Milo, whilst its beauty will be withheld from the eyes of another.

On entering the chapel I had taken a very back seat, not only from modesty, but that I might the better see all that was going on. It was not far from the door, too, and I could slip out when the fair mourners were overcome with grief, or I with the invisible strains. In truth, also, the benches near me were occupied by young and interesting mourners. I assure you, smile as you may, I did not in the least care about that. I simply was carrying out my theory that beauty of face and form is generally allied to grace and poetry of motion; and I was anxious to study effects. One should never lose these opportunities.

But, to my horror, the fair mourners gathered in numbers, and before I knew where I was, my passage to the door was blocked up by kneeling figures, and I felt myself a prisoner. I suppose I betrayed my consternation by some unconscious movement or expression; for three mourners beside me, young and fair, that I had thought plunged in woe, looked at me, then at each other, then drew their mantillas and—laughed.

After all, this is only daily life. There are many occasions for mourning in the world, but it is only now and then that the heart

puts on sable with the garment. We lose many friends, but it is only one or two who make our heart empty and our world void, and for whom we weep in the secret chamber and the silent watches of the night. Yet further: it is only one in a thousand who has the power to weep: for you cannot weep without feeling, and mere tears are not weeping. The man who mourns his friend for a week, then returns to his old life and forgets that he had ever been—this may be the friendship of the world, but it is a delusion. Some years ago I remember a little Frenchman saying to me:

“What do you take as the sign of sincerity in a man and of true feeling? I think it is when the eyes and the mouth laugh together. When the mouth laughs without the eyes I mistrust my individual, and have as little to do with him as possible.”

This little man and I were great friends, though half his life was over when mine began. He was a profound student of human nature; he was a perfect artist; like many Frenchmen, he was full of vivacity, and fire and life. The fire of genius was consuming a frame that ought to have known nothing but calmness. He was intimate with George Sand, and one of her most devoted admirers. “She is plain,” he would say; “she converses little; yet there is an indescribable, an *intangible* charm about her. And when she is in the rare mood for conversation, there is no one like her; her ideas are profound, her sympathies are deep and searching.”

I fancied that many of his strange thoughts came from her. His test of sincerity was a true one as far as it went; but it was only an item in a fathomless subject, which has many tests. He might have added another, commonplace enough, but an indication: the handshake. If you put forth your hand to a man who professes to be your friend, and there is no response beyond the cold touch of the fingers, why it is all over. There is a very great deal, also, in the expression of the hand. I have studied and am persuaded of this.

But these are terrible digressions! Yet did I not warn you at the very outset of what was probably in store for you? When these lines fall under your eye shall you regret your royal command that I should send you full and faithful details of my wanderings? For having bidden me write, are you not in honour bound to read?

Revenons à nos moutons. Outwardly they were very black sheep, though captivating—as I fear black sheep often are; but there was every semblance (you see I am guarded in my expressions) of penitence amongst them; and the sable garments, as sable garments generally are, were most becoming. In the centre of the chapel was a *something* like a black sarcophagus, covered with velvet. At first I thought it must hold the dead, but it did not. It was merely an Emblem to impress the minds of this people, who cannot get on without emblems and symbols, and signs and superstitions.

At the far end, before the lighted altar, priests in gorgeous vest-

ments went through the mass, and tried distractedly to keep in with the music : or so it sounded, for I believe music and priests were independent of each other.

The chapel was now full. Many women had come in, carrying their own seats : a three-legged contrivance, that looked very much like a stool of repentance. It was really a pretty sight ; graceful, pathetic, religious in tone and feeling, impressive from the unstudied attitudes of these fair mourners : all very much marred by the execrable music. This was invisible ; above me ; but they were not such strains as the Peri listened to outside the Gate of Eden, or she would certainly have fled. As I now wished to do : but how ? A citadel may be stormed, but not a group of kneeling mourners.

Time went on ; the chapel became oppressive ; a strong odour of incense rose upon the confined air ; the strains of Mozart grew discordant enough to disturb his shade and bring it forth in just rebellion. There was wailing above and weeping below.

I suppose I must have turned slightly restless. For suddenly a bell rang at the altar, and all devotees rose from their knees and changed their postures, and sat down upon benches and chairs and three-legged stools. And in the confusion, the fairest of fair mourners whispered to me in excellent French, with a glance of her beautiful eyes I shall never forget :

“ Now seize your opportunity, if you *must* go.”

And behold, in front of me, welcome as the Red Sea path to the Israelites, was a small avenue of clear pavement, conducting to the door.

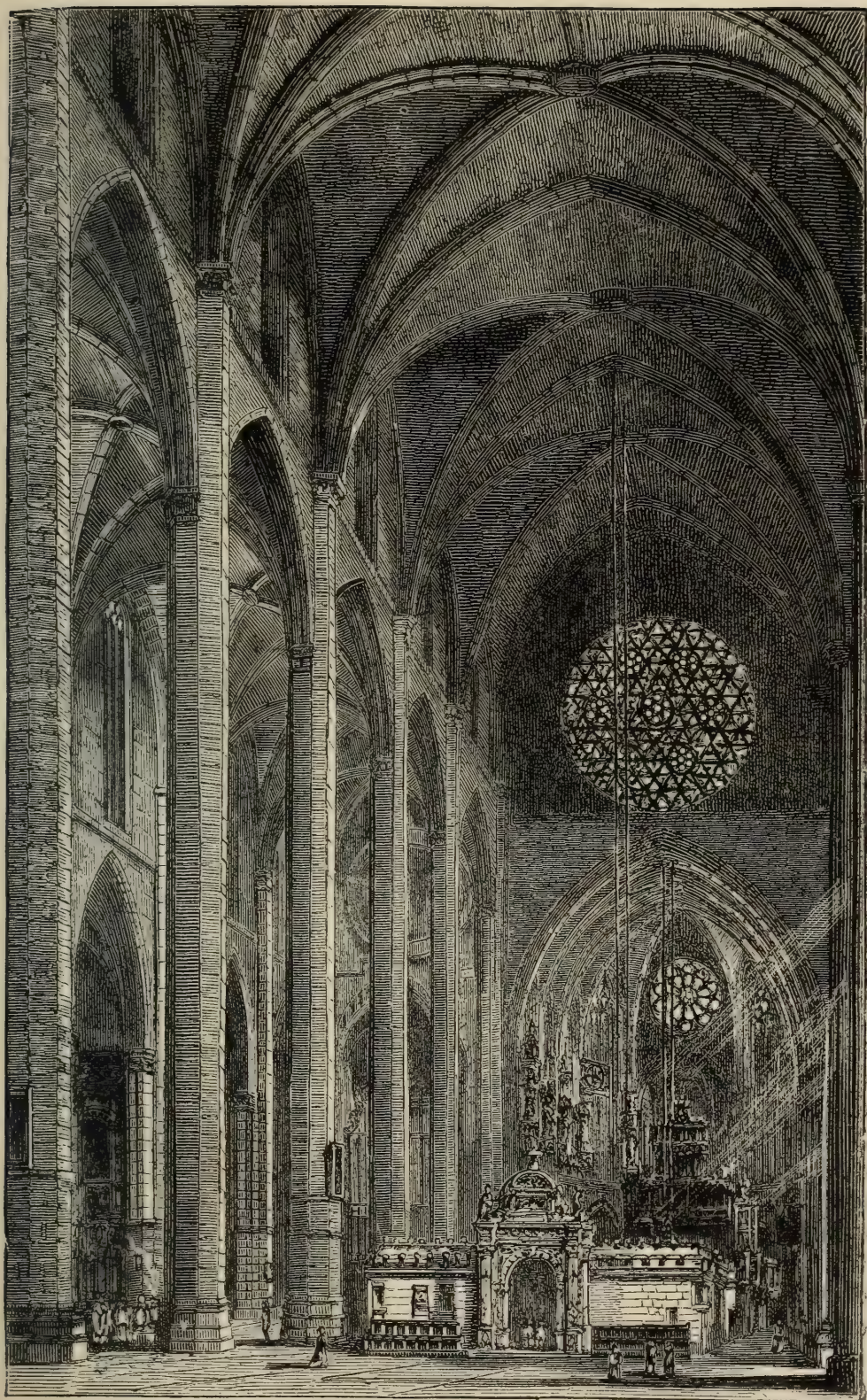
There was no time for hesitation, or I should have been lost. Those eyes would have held me spellbound. I passed through, and as I did so, like the waters rolling in behind the great army led by Moses, sable billows met and closed up the passage. As I reached the door the orchestra gave forth one long-expiring groan, so loud and horrible that all the grimalkins that ever joined in midnight serenade never equalled it ; and I thought that surely all the strings would break and all the brass instruments would bend and twist in agonies of shame. Not at all. It was only the end of the first part, and the second began immediately.

In the courtyard H. C. was still sketching, surrounded by a small crowd of gaping admirers, who took him for a magician. He was looking calm and serene as a penitential monk, in spite of his growing reputation for sorcery, and the strains and discords that reached him, veiled, perhaps, but distinct.

“ Have you been edified ? ” he asked, with irritating urbanity. “ Has the music pleased you ? It sounds quite heavenly to me.”

“ Glad to hear it,” I replied. “ In that case I can only hope that a special paradise is reserved for you.”

Are there moments when a little irritation is excusable, a little sarcasm the right thing ? You have often said it is as useless for



PALMA CATHEDRAL.

me to attempt sarcasm as it was for a certain nameless animal to put on the lion's skin. Had you been present on this occasion your opinion would have been modified. I must have been emphatic, for even H. C., the essence of embodied calmness, looked up in wonder.

"I'm sure you don't mean that," he remarked, mildly. "Paradise without you ——"

This was too much. I stopped him at once.

"We flew through France at express speed," I said; "yet you pretend to have caught the Frenchman's spirit, and begin to pay compliments. Show me rather what you have done in your own realm, where I admit your supremacy."

He held up what promised to be a very lovely sketch, but as yet was a mere outline.

"Not very advanced," I remarked. "Hope you have not been composing poetry?" severely. "But this is a grand commencement. No wonder these interesting natives look upon you as a wizard—for that they do so is evident."

"And I have narrowly escaped a wizard's fate—the stake," laughed H. C. "Whilst you were in the chapel enjoying those celestial strains, I have gone through a perilous persecution, a severe scrutiny, an inquisitorial enquiry. Forgive these long words. If they are not pure Saxon, they are expressive."

Here he paused, and in a most irritating and deliberate manner put in half-a-dozen strokes.

"But the persecution?" I enquired at last.

"I had hardly made a dozen strokes with the pencil," proceeded H. C., suiting the action to the word, "when up came a sentry and said something I naturally could not understand. The dead languages have been quite enough for me—I never intend to trouble myself about the living. I shook my head, and he repeated his sentence in a louder tone—as if sound meant sense. Of course, we know the opposite is generally the case. Well, as the upshot of all this, he walked me off upstairs, where I ran the gauntlet of half-a-dozen old fellows. They tried to look wise. One was grey-headed, and wore a uniform. All glared at me. I ought to have shaken in my shoes, but I couldn't manage it. I felt inclined to laugh, but politeness restrained me. Then they took my sketch book, turned it all sorts of ways; upside down, inside out; consulted, deliberated: spoke to me in half-a-dozen different tongues, but not in English, so that their wisdom was wasted. Finally, they gave me up in despair, consigned me to the sentry, who conducted me back to this spot. Since then I have been left in peace."

This was a strange story. "You had better make hay whilst the sun shines," I advised. "These singular old fellows may change their minds again, and banish you altogether."

"Not impossible," returned H. C., calmly. "Foreigners are not at

all to be trusted. They are changeable as the wind, overbearing as a tyrant, and suspicious as a monkey."

To foretell is to make happen.

This very afternoon H. C. returned after luncheon to complete his sketch. He had been drawing for an hour or two, and his task was coming to an end, when he was again conducted before the Mallorcan Inquisition. His work ought to have created nothing but admiration, proved a passport to favour. Instead of that, it seemed to rouse indignation. It was too good for them. That well, those trees, that doorway—these were the real thing, not imitation. He was carrying them all off bodily. Vengeance: not the rack, or thumbscrews, or the pendulum: but expulsion.

He was led to the gates by a couple of sentries with fixed bayonets and fiery faces, and a plain intimation that if he reappeared he would be condemned without quarter and shot without mercy.

The strangest part of this story is that the Council did not confiscate the sketch, but allowed him to carry it away. Thus I am able to enclose it to you. You will perceive that the sister arts of music and drawing are not always allied. It is possible to be utterly devoid of one whilst possessing the other to perfection. Here, indeed, lies one great difference between genius and talent. A man may have talent for many things, genius only for one. The Michael Angelos of the world are not even the exception, and may perhaps be numbered on less than the fingers of one hand.

Outside and opposite this beautiful courtyard is the glory of Palma, its wonderful cathedral. At the present moment it is undergoing restoration, and we do not see it at its best. But we see it in all its greatness and grandeur, its vast dimensions. Somewhat, indeed, of this is lost at all times, for on every side, except that facing the sea, it is too closely surrounded by houses. These interfere both with the near and the distant views.

How shall I conjure up this remarkable building to your mental vision? In the first place it stands on the sea-shore, rising above the fortifications against which the waters of the Mediterranean for ever lap and surge. In colour I have told you that it is a rich amber, toned and mellowed by age. A gigantic mass of brickwork, with flying buttresses, and innumerable small pinnacles, and side buttresses so large and substantial, they may well defy Time itself, as they have already stood the centuries.

There is one solitary tower over the north doorway, which is too little seen from a distance. Its height is insufficient. It has narrow pointed windows and an openwork balustrade, and looks less severe than the rest of the building. The *ensemble* of this little corner: the north doorway, the tower, and the picturesque ecclesiastical house adjoining it: makes a beautiful and striking picture. But here some of the side buttresses and some of the windows have evidently been filled up, and somewhat mar the beauty of the foreground.

The cathedral was commenced in the thirteenth century, immediately after Majorca was wrested from the Moors, and was finished at the end of the sixteenth, if even now it can be said to be perfected. There is certainly a curiously incomplete air about it; a want of height and grandeur above the roof. The eye is not satisfied with seeing. The pinnacles look small and trivial in comparison with the immense mass they crown. Something larger and more dignified appears needed. Very beautiful is the old tower, but insufficiently seen. This is my impression, at present; yet it may be that the architect who raised this grand pile was right and I am wrong. If so, I shall probably change my opinion.

The interior is pure Gothic, plain and severe. It has been called Gothic-Mallorcan, as denoting a style specially belonging to Majorca. There was once a very famous School of Art here, which is said to have very much influenced the architecture of Spain. That men could have raised such a monument as this reflects everlasting credit upon them, and proves that in Majorca, artistically speaking, there were giants in those days. But it was an age of giants, in other places besides Majorca.

On entering the cathedral you are awed, not by its beauty, but by its immense size. It is beautiful, but this dawns upon you later on. Coming to it with the impression of Barcelona Cathedral fresh in the memory, that of Palma, at first sight, seems rather to repel by its severity. Barcelona is simply a dream. It is Gothic, but rich in detail and refinement. Its tone cannot be imitated, or imagined, or excelled. Palma has nothing of all this, but it is infinitely larger and loftier. Any impressiveness of tone it possesses is due to subdued light.

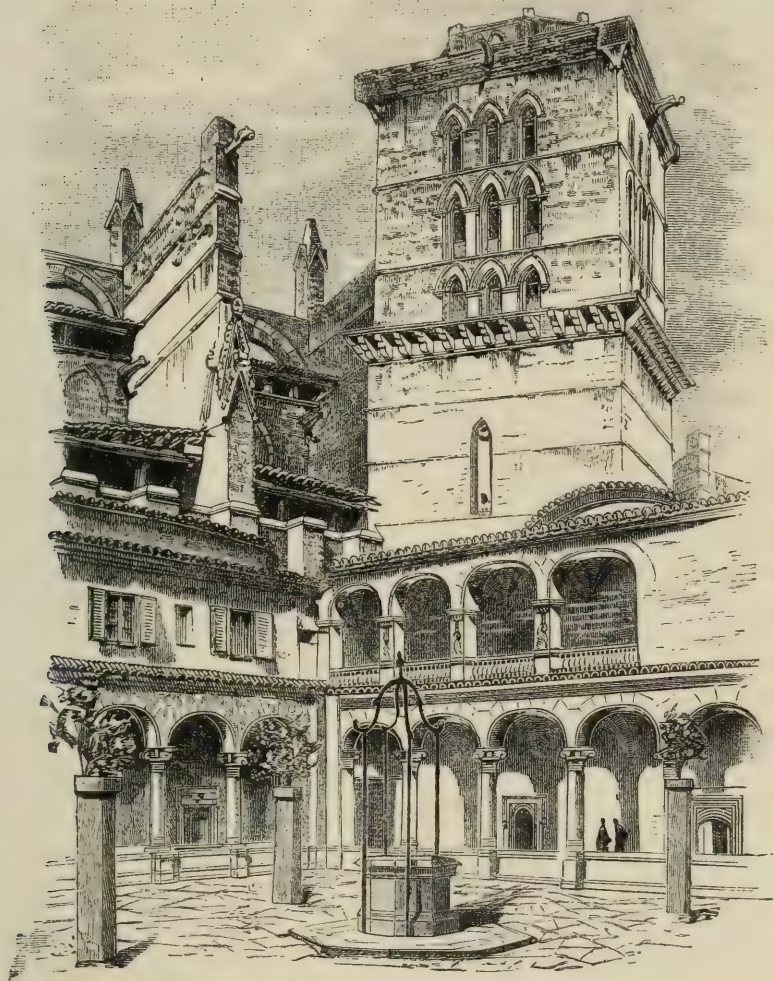
The effect of its immense size is increased by the fact that the whole interior is seen at once. At first this appears to give it a certain *empty* appearance, but it also adds greatly to its majesty. Many of the Spanish cathedrals are so divided and cut up by naves and arches, chapels, tombs, and high altars, that all grandeur is lost, and many visits are necessary for receiving anything like a clear and distinct idea. I remember how especially this was the case at Santiago.

The form of Palma Cathedral is rectangular. Its width, including the side chapels is 190 feet; without them it is 147 feet; it is 247 feet long, and nearly 150 feet high. Realise these dimensions and imagine the whole seen at one glance. The pillars forming the central nave are octagonal, slender and severe. But they are architectural wonders, probably unique; for nowhere else will be found pillars of such amazing height resting on bases so small. The effect is hardly pleasing, but it is a marvellous achievement.

H. C., with all his knowledge of these subjects, was simply astounded. At first I thought he was going to extemporise, but fortunately it had an opposite effect upon him and rendered him

speechless. Presently, however, the flood-gates of eloquence were let loose, and he treated me to a learned discourse upon architecture, with Palma illustrations, which really gave me a very bad headache. *Il faut souffrir pour être—aimable.*

To stand at the west end with your back to the great west doorway, and gaze down the centre nave, is an experience rare as it is impressive. The expanse is vast, and so is the obscurity: solemn and



CATHEDRAL CLOISTERS, PALMA.

mysterious. Footsteps are lost on the pavement. Men and women are mere pigmies; at the far end they might be phantoms. The pillars tower upwards, reduced, in so much space, almost to the dimensions of mere shafts. The pointed arches between are beautiful, and the eye amidst so much severity rests upon them with pleasure.

The arches of the side aisles add very much to the effect. The pointed roofs are almost lost in obscurity. On both sides the windows are small and high up, admitting that dim religious light without which no cathedral in these latitudes would be complete.

This obscurity helps to throw out into more vivid relief the beautiful rose window over the choir, filled with ancient stained glass. It is a kaleidoscopic vision amidst all this gloom : a gloom only partially dispelled when at certain hours of the morning the sunbeams penetrate the high windows and fall in long, tangible shafts of light upon pillars and arches, side chapels and pavement, warming into life what is generally cold, solitary and sombre. There is a smaller rose window at the extreme east end, over the high altar ; but its glass is less ancient and far less beautiful than its companion above the choir.

This choir, in the centre of the nave, has old and beautiful stalls carved in walnut wood, and a carved pulpit at each of the north and south corners, dating from the sixteenth century. The screen, with great judgment, has been made low, and does not in any way interfere with the general view of the interior.

On the left is the great organ. I heard it this afternoon, and have no desire to hear it again. It was very much out of tune, and could never have boasted anything in the way of tone. This is to be regretted. A fine instrument in this great building would have an indescribable effect upon the listener. Beneath it hangs the head of a Moor, carved in wood ; turbaned, bearded and hideous ; and looking as if fresh from the block. This is found in many of the Spanish cathedrals, and we did not fail to notice it in Barcelona. It is a remnant of barbarism.

Beneath the organ is a doorway leading into the Chapel Royal, the earliest portion of the cathedral, and above which is the tower. It is empty and disused, but still rich in decoration, with a wooden gallery of fine Moorish work. It contains also the tomb of Don Jaime II., whose body is shown by the sacristan. We do not intend to avail ourselves of the privilege.

A side door admits one to the cloisters. They are small, and not very remarkable. Slender pillars supporting romanesque arches and a tiled roof, with dwellings above, no doubt inhabited by ecclesiastics. The centre of the quadrangle is adorned by one of those picturesque ironwork wells so often found in Palma. From the north-west corner a fine effect is obtained of the side of the cathedral and the tower, with the cloisters beneath. This view has so taken hold of H. C.'s imagination that he intends to make it his very next sketch. Let us hope the ecclesiastical authorities of Palma will prove less barbarous than the Inquisitorial Council.

I have used the word solitary in connection with Palma Cathedral, and think it happily chosen, for it exactly expresses its effect upon me. The building is generally empty, except at service time. Its great expanse is heightened by obscurity, though partly lost in it. You almost feel lost yourself, desolate and *solitary*. This great monument, like the mountains of earth, is separated from you by size and majesty.

Yesterday H. C. determined to sketch it. He went straight to his task after breakfast. His iron constitution disdained such trivial considerations as luncheon, but I insisted upon taking him a little Eden-like refreshment: a bunch of grapes, a pomegranate, a few green figs, a few olives; a little bread and some crystal water.

My own substantial repast ended, this refined assortment was carefully packed in silver paper and placed in a basket shaped like a cornucopia. Everything, you see, was in keeping. Francisco, the waiter who has specially attached himself to our train at the Fonda de Mallorca—perhaps because he is glad of the rare opportunity of airing his French with me: or it may be from spontaneous devotion: he is an Italian and evidently as impulsive as his race—insisted upon bearing this exquisite burden which I should have been proud to carry. Three things, you know, may be carried in polite society—books, game and fruit. Francisco accompanied me down the street and up the long broad flight of steps, a veritable Jacob's ladder, which leads to the height on which the cathedral so nobly reposes. You will observe the flight in one of the enclosed sketches.

Nous avions oublié le chat dans le coin.

Arrived at the north doorway, to my horror it was closed. It ought to have occurred to me, and most certainly to Francisco, that the cathedral is always closed from 12 till 3. The Italian struck his forehead as if suddenly seized with headache, and gazed in despair at the cornucopia.

For my own part, I cannot quite define or describe the nameless sensation that crept over me. H. C. was enclosed, alone, in that vast, depressing building. For the time being, he was shut up in a living tomb. Working in shadow, no doubt he had been overlooked; was himself unaware of the fate in store for him. But with the irony of fate he would certainly discover it. What then? Would he go mad? People do go mad sometimes from solitary confinement. Or, again, he might have overrated his powers of endurance, and syncope might ensue from want of food. And sometimes when people faint they never "come to" again.

It was now half-past one. I sent the waiter back to the hotel for stimulant in case of need, and when he had brought it, took charge of the cornucopia, and dismissed him to his work. Then for an hour and a half I wandered about, a prey to anxiety. The horrors of imagination were mine. Before the hour struck I found myself at the door of the sacristy. It was open, and a very amiable young fellow admitted me. I could almost have embraced him.

I hastened to the far end and found H. C. in a state of collapse. There was not even the slightest suspicion of poetry in him. You have heard of the Hercules Furens. If you can imagine the exact opposite to this—a Samson shorn of his locks—such was H. C. at that moment. The stimulant came to the rescue and restored him to his ordinary self. Then he showed me his sketch. He had

managed to work well, and it was very fine and bold. The subject is extremely difficult, but with H. C. it seems that the greater the difficulty, the happier the result. I suppose that, like going up a hill, or climbing a tower, we put on extra strength to meet the occasion.

But he could work no more to-day. And it was after this that, wandering about the town, we entered the church, where they were



PALMA.

getting ready for a Requiem, and where the kneeling figures formed so conspicuous a part of the attraction.

I have spoken to you of the sea and its calm waters that for ever beat and break and surge at the foot of this beautiful Palma—the blue waters of the Mediterranean. But they are not always serene. They were not so the night we crossed. Every now and then the little boat struggled and strained and shook and shivered, and now

and then by way of variety seemed to stand on end, uncertain whether to turn a somersault or not. For several days after this a storm raged, the sea beat upon the shore, the winds blew, and the weather was altogether exceptional for Majorca.

The very night after our arrival, a vessel was wrecked just in front of the Cathedral, and there it lies, a sad monument to departed glory. It is gradually going to pieces. The morning after, we went down and took a photograph of it—for we have brought with us a camera wherewith to beguile idle moments, or to carry away a memorial of some spot that may especially take our fancy and which there may be no time to sketch. This is so often the case—so often a matter of regret.

Then we took our plate to a photographer we have discovered here. A man who is quite a character; an enthusiast in his work; full of artistic feeling; who fortunately talks excellent French, and is not sparing of his words or his time.

How do things get known in this world—small as well as great matters? Above all, those things we would wish hidden in a corner or locked up in a closet? What a curious, gossiping, meddlesome race the human race must be.

Within a few hours there comes to the photographer the Captain of the wreck, sad and sighing. "Señor," said he, "I understand that you have a photograph of my unfortunate vessel. I should like one as a remembrance of what was once my happiness and is now my sorrow. I will pay you in gold for it."

"Señor," replied the man of Art, "it is true that there is a photograph of your vessel, but if you offered me diamonds I could not give you a copy. It belongs to an English gentleman staying at the Fonda de Mallorca, who has entrusted it to my care, and I can only be worthy of my trust. But if you will call at the Fonda and obtain the necessary permission, I shall be only too happy to comply with your request."

All which, faithfully repeated to me, I need not say that any number of souvenirs were freely placed at the disposal of the unfortunate master of the wreck, with whom we felt every sympathy.

The four days' gale ceased. During that time no boat approached the island or left it. We were separated from the world. It has all passed away—the gale, not the world. At the end of four days there came a great calm, in which we are now revelling. The skies are burning and brilliant by day and sparkling by night. Sirius faithfully following Orion, is worthy of inspiring the finest sonnet ever written by Shakespeare—or H. C. Large and flashing, it really seems at times to blaze with fire. It is night as I write; for to write by day, with so much to be seen and done, is absolutely impossible.

This is a long letter, yet does not seem to have given you half an idea of Palma. I have wandered from my subject, and am dissatisfied.

The theme of my next must be the same. La suite au prochain numéro, as the feuilletons say. Perhaps I shall then, with a little more experience, know more of my subject, and may place it more vividly before you.

Il Sereno has several times elevated his voice whilst I have been conversing with you. Again I hear him, and I dare not mention the hour he announces. "The morning cometh, and also the night," and it will soon be morning again. Crépuscule will break : dawn appear in the East. In this sleeping Fonda there is no Narbonne station to administer coffee in the small hours. H. C. has long since retired to his room. Sketching and writing poetry are evidently exhausting. *Il Sereno* is calling down a benediction upon the town. Imagine that you hear it ; and be very sure that, if my wishes avail, all good angels keep watch and ward over you.



DEATH OR LIFE ?

DEAD ! and so late he cheered us with his smile !
 Dead ! and so late he charmed us with the life
 That streamed from his great heart, that knew no guile,
 Albeit stirring in our daily strife !

Not so ! not so !
 For saw ye not, ye who beheld the close,
 His spirit triumph in the mortal throes
 Of that last overthrow ?—
 Clear, bright, rejoicing, free ;
 A glorified and blessed soul,
 Made perfect and made whole
 By that release !
 For evermore to be—
 And be at peace !

G. C.

INFATUATED.

By ELLA EDERSHEIM.

I.

IT was one of those dreary November evenings when London seems to look its gloomiest. A heavy mist, that later on would turn into rain, hung over the city, and the streets were wet and muddy with the downpour of many days.

It was not a cheerful locality, either, that Leonard Crawford had chosen for his walk. He was strolling along one of those dirty back streets that are to be found in the extreme West, where dwelling-houses seem to be mixed up indiscriminately with second-hand booksellers, Italian warehouses, and curiosity shops. In the latter, indeed, this quarter of the city is especially rich, and it was this circumstance which made its attraction for Leonard.

He did not take much notice of the cold; perhaps, comfortably wrapped in his fur-lined coat, he scarcely felt it. It was with the gaze of an interested observer that the young man looked about him and seemed to note everything around. He had a deliberation, both in look and manner, that one rarely observes in the hurry of London life, and perhaps it was owing to this habit rather than either to his good looks or his good clothes that one would have singled him out as a remarkable person.

He stopped beside a lamp-post, and watched with a kind of amused interest a thin child, who, half sheltered from observation in the arch of an empty house, was tearing with greedy fingers the shreds of meat from an old bone. He felt in his pocket for a copper, and after repeated unsuccessful dives, brought up from its depths a half-crown, whose silver face shone in the gaslight. The child watched his movements with gleaming eyes. Leonard did not ignore this; he simply did not observe it. He restored the coin to its chinking comrades, and sauntering on with a good-humoured smile, said over his shoulder: "Very sorry—can't find one." The child watched the tall figure with a fascinated stare, till it had turned the corner of the street, and then resumed her bone, but it seemed to have lost its relish.

It was a very dirty little shop-window that next attracted Leonard's attention; so dirty, indeed, that it wanted a practised eye to discern the goods, more hidden than revealed, behind the dusty glass. He stopped and looked long at the miscellaneous heaps of cracked china, mildewed engravings, embroidered vestments and old coins. It was an inviting assortment, and one that tempted the collector's soul within him; for Leonard Crawford was an ardent lover of curiosities

of all sorts, and one who both from taste and habit delighted to accumulate them. After a little hesitation he pressed the handle of the door and passed in. Here, very much the same disorder met his eye. A noisy bell welcomed him clamorously, but no living being was in sight; the only sign of life was the sound of a violin, that came to him apparently from the other side of a low glass door, at the back of the shop.

Finding himself thus alone, Leonard made a careful inspection of the shelves and cupboards that clothed the walls. The china he soon found was mostly spurious, but there were portfolios of engravings which no forger's hand could have executed, and the coins promised well. And all this time the sighing of the violin was in his ears.

At last he began to grow impatient of such solitude, and paced the little shop with a heavy step; then, when this produced no result, he shook the shop-door violently, till the bell clashed excitedly and twisted itself in impotent somersaults over his head. He repeated this operation several times, becoming each time more angry, yet also growing more determined to attract the attention of the violin player: for there was a doggedness about Leonard, that opposition or indifference seldom failed to rouse.

And at last he was successful. The music suddenly ceased, and after a moment's pause the glass door slowly opened, and a girl stood before him. At sight of her all Leonard's anger, which had been bubbling to his lips in a flood of impatient words, sank back. For who could speak roughly to that pale vision, that in the gloom of the little shop seemed as if it might melt away even at a breath?

She came forward slowly, and without lifting her eyes, whose deep lashes lay on a face of almost deathly pallor. Her round white throat rose, without relief of any kind, from a heavy, black trailing gown, and to Leonard's enraptured gaze, seemed from the contrast almost to sparkle. Her hair, which was a dull red-brown, was caught in a loose knot at the top of her head, and she still held the violin-bow in her hand.

The moments passed as Leonard gazed; but as she did not speak or raise her eyes he was forced at last to address her.

"Good evening — ah — I — ah — wanted to look at your coins."

The girl moved forward, with a wonderfully graceful motion, and taking a drawer from the back of the counter, still in perfect silence, placed it for Leonard's inspection.

The young man fumbled feebly amongst its contents. Why did she not speak? Why would she not look at him?

"It was to match these I wanted one," he said at last desperately. "I want a fourth to have them made into sleeve-links. Here," making a dive at a little piece of gold, "don't you think this one will do?"

The girl stretched out her hand—what a beautiful, white hand!—and took it from him. She held the coin up to the gas, and as the light shone behind it, it made the shadows of the fingers and the soft palm a delicious red, a few tones warmer than the dusky head; and Leonard looked at her with a kind of awe, almost fancying that one of the Bartolozzis, which had first attracted his attention in the window, had taken flesh, and blood, and life, and come—to him.

At last she spoke. Leonard had begun to dread this as a possible awakening from his dream. But her voice was soft and low, and like the distant, melancholy echo of her violin.

“That coin is false,” she said, as she finished her examination of it; “but I can find you one like it that is real.”

And she glided from the room.

Left alone, Leonard pressed his hands over his dazzled eyes, and remained in that position till a slight movement aroused him. The girl had re-entered the shop, and stood before him holding the promised curio, her eyes still cast down.

As he took the coin from her hand an overwhelming impulse made him clasp the white fingers in his warm grasp, while he stammered, almost unconsciously to himself, in a low, passionate voice: “Look up at me; you must look up at me!”

Slowly, very slowly, the heavy lids lifted, and he met the surprised gaze of her great dark eyes.

“What do they call you?” he said.

“Céline,” she replied, and drew her hand from his.

The shop-bell tinkled loudly, the door opened, and a gust of cold wind ushered in a short, thick-set man.

In a few more minutes, Leonard, still with a feeling of bewilderment, found himself in the street, with the little, unknown coin, in his hand: the shopman’s hearty: “Always glad to see you, sir; lots o’ things in your line, sir,” with its strong cockney accent ringing in his ears.

II.

ALTHOUGH glamour may be very delightful while it lasts, its dispersion is never a pleasing process. It is not, to say the least, comfortable to realise that one has been acting foolishly, and to Leonard Crawford this was a peculiarly bitter sensation. As a rule he was a prudent man, and generally enjoyed his own good opinion. But as he sat, later on that same evening, at the family dinner table, with its well-known surroundings, he could not deny to himself that scarcely an hour since he had been dangerously near, if not altogether in an undignified and foolish situation.

Perhaps it was the forcible contrast of the dusty little shop, with its single gas-jet and dirty floor, and the warm, well-lit apartment where they were all assembled at dinner, that brought this fact home to him. Everything seemed so commonplace and everyday. The six fat

candles, upheld in solid silver, shone with exactly their customary light. There sat his highly respectable father, whom Leonard had never known to make a remark unaddressed ; his mother, a delicate-looking woman, round whom the shadow of departed ringlets and roses seemed to linger, was chatting on in her usual spirited, aimless way ; his two sisters, pretty, fresh-looking girls, were exchanging the ordinary gossip of callers and engagements. If, indeed, there were another world of beauty, and mystery and art, such as Leonard had seemed to catch a glimpse of in that dingy street, could these good people live on thus, unsuspecting and self-satisfied, through the long vacuity of their prosperous, uneventful lives ? No ; he had been dreaming. Faint and cold and tired, his inner eyes had seen a vision, and his senses had deceived him into thinking it reality. No wonder that his answers to his mother's incessant questioning sounded rough and abrupt, and that his favourite dishes passed untasted.

Something of her son's indisposition could not long escape Mrs. Crawford's motherly eyes.

"Leonard !" she remonstrated, as the young man, starting suddenly, sent a long stream of claret flowing from his glass over the spotless white of the table-cloth : "what *is* the matter with you ? I have never seen you do such an awkward thing in all my life. Pray, Bucket," turning to the servant, "wipe up that dreadful mess. What can it be, Leonard ? And you have eaten literally nothing at all. What have you been doing with yourself ? I am afraid you have stayed out too late and caught a chill. Indeed, I hope it may not be a fever ! To refuse game pie—and you were out at tea-time, too."

"Oh, then it's easily explained," laughed Fanny, his youngest sister. "He's been to tea and courting with my Lady Clara, and that always makes him cross. The uncertainty of the wooing-time affects your spirits, doesn't it, Lennie ? And we must all make allowance for any unevenness in your appetite, and," *sotto voce*, "your temper."

"For shame, Fanny !" reproved her elder sister, sharply. "Lady Clara is a very nice—ah—person, and if you only behaved half as well to her brother as Leonard does about her, it would be a very good thing for you and for us all."

"I don't see that," pouted Fanny. "Surely if Lennie chooses to offer himself up nobly on the altar of an aristocratic marriage, the sacrifice is sufficient for the whole family, and his poor little sister may escape."

To Leonard such conversation was insupportable. He pleaded the excuse of a headache ; and, submitting impatiently to his mother's caresses, left the family circle for the quiet of his own room.

Then had Fanny to suffer a severe reprimand. "For 'tis monstrous of you," said her sister, "to try to upset Leonard and spoil everything, just as matters are going so well. Of course, she is a few years older than he, and has no money. But what does that matter, when papa will give him plenty ? I am convinced that

Leonard's—well—regard for Lady Clara has increased each time they have met : and you know he is not the kind of man to fall in love at first sight. Then it is pretty clear that she likes him. It is perfectly necessary for us to make good marriages, and in doing it Leonard is doing the very best thing for himself and for his family. I only wish, Fanny, dear," coaxingly, "that you would follow his example."

As for the subject of all this discussion, he sat moody and depressed, huddled up in a luxurious dressing-gown by his blazing fire. His sisters were quite right in their surmises, for of late Leonard's wooing of Lady Clara Hautness had made rapid progress, and he had begun to think almost with satisfaction of this alliance, the advantages of which he was not slow to perceive. But to-night the little shop and the shadowy, pale girl would obtrude themselves between him and thoughts of the house in Belgravia ; and struggle with himself as he would, her low voice and that one look from her beautiful eyes haunted him incessantly.

His valet, a small, dark Italian, who, from having travelled with Leonard for many months as courier, had been engaged as personal attendant, waited on his master most obsequiously. He saw that something was wrong, and surmising that, since *café noir* had failed, solitude was the only remaining remedy possible, prepared noiselessly to leave the room. But Leonard called him back crossly.

"Why are you going so soon, Paolo?" he said. "Can't you see I am not well and don't want to be left alone?"

Thus admonished, Paolo returned submissively.

"I am sorry for the master," he said in perfect English. "Would he that I played to him a little?"

To this suggestion Leonard immediately assented. He was passionately fond of music, and accustomed to give himself up entirely to all the sensations it produced. To lie back in his chair like a modern Saul, and have his dark-eyed, dark-locked David chase away his melancholy was no unusual occurrence. And to-night it seemed that Paolo played even more beautifully than usual. Seated cross-legged on the rug at his master's feet, the fire-light dancing on his swarthy face, he made a pleasing picture, and gradually the cloud rolled away from the young man's brow. As the Italian finished the weird air he had chosen, Leonard leaned forward with something like enthusiasm.

"By Jove!" he said, "you do play well! Why on earth don't you go on the stage, man, and make a name for yourself?"

"Some day, master ; some day," said the Italian, and gazed into the fire with a far-away look in his eyes.

"What makes a fellow play so well, I wonder?" mused Leonard aloud, after a few minutes' pause. "Of course he must have the trick, to begin with ; but then— It's soul, I suppose ; soul and passion that carry him on—seem to carry him right away."

"Yes," said Paolo, though it seemed as if he did not hear; "it is soul—passion."

"But how do you manage it?" persisted Leonard. "How do you start off? How does it come?"

"How does it come?" repeated the valet: "I do not know. One plays, and when one thinks of her, one ——"

"Oh, there's a 'her' in the matter!" interrupted Leonard half mockingly. "I did not know you had a 'her,' Paolo."

"No?" replied the valet with some dignity. "But why then does the master think I leave the sunny Italy of wine and flowers ——"

He broke off suddenly, but, as Leonard made no remark, continued again, though it was as if he spoke to himself.

"Ah! but where *she* is, one needs not wine and sun! When she looks, does not the blood fly faster, and the heart beat more warmly than by the fullest goblet? And when she smiles ——"

The dark head was thrown back, the black eyes glowed like fire in the uncertain light, and a faint smile played on his lips, as though a vision of the beloved were before him.

Leonard, afraid to interrupt him, remained perfectly silent; but in a few minutes the Italian started, looked about him sheepishly, and, picking up his flute, wished his master "good-night," and left the room.

Leonard poked the fire thoughtfully.

"That's love," he said; "there is no mistaking that. I don't feel that for Clara. I think I'll go and see Céline by daylight."

And he turned into bed.

III.

AND he went to see Céline, and went again. And at every fresh visit the spell, which the pale, silent girl had from the very first exercised over him, seemed to strengthen and increase. He felt, and owned to himself, that in her presence he was her slave.

In her presence: for undoubtedly when alone, or if he happened to enter the dusty, little shop and Céline was not there, the incongruity, and, indeed, almost ludicrousness, of the situation would strike him forcibly.

Yet he was always sure of a welcome. True, Céline, whom he had learned to seek and find in the cosy, little parlour at the back of the shop, seemed to the infatuated young man to be immoveably cold. But her father, sitting in his accustomed chair in the shop corner, busy over some work of elaborate china-mending or retouching, would always look up as Leonard hastily crossed the shop, with a kindly smile and some cheerful remark. He was a strange, little man, with a square-shaped head, covered with short, thick, white hair, a smooth-shaven face, and a pair of keen eyes. He, it was, who had first introduced Leonard to the back parlour, and he, it was, who

had first commanded his daughter to "play to the young gentleman." From him, too, Leonard gleaned all the particulars worthy of note of the life of Céline. The old man, only too glad of a listener, poured into Leonard's willing ear how "his girl" had just come back from Paris, where she had met all sorts of "fine people," and where she had spent three years in the study of the violin.

"She'll be a professional," said the proud father, "and will make her mark, too, or I'm very much mistaken."

And as Leonard sat in the chair of honour, and Céline, silently obedient to his command, would take up her violin, he felt within himself that the old man was not far wrong. How lovely the girl looked as she stood in a dark corner of the room, whither she always retired when she played to him. And as, gradually forgetting the presence of a listener, she became absorbed in her music, Leonard knew that here, indeed, was the making of a great artiste.

These visits to the curiosity shop had been going on all the winter ; no one, however, but Paolo even suspected them. Leonard had soon found that it was more politic, as well as necessary for his own comfort, to have a confidant ; and who so fitting as the faithful valet ? Many a bouquet of choice hot-house flowers would the trusty Italian bear to his master's lady-love, when that master was prevented by some imperative home-call from keeping an engagement. Paolo had never a message to bring in return, but if he could even say : "She did not speak, but she smiled," Leonard would feel fully content.

At other times, when after a visit to Lady Clara he seemed to realise more keenly the poverty and sordidness of Céline's home, Paolo again would be the recipient of his master's woes. He would not say much, but Leonard sometimes fancied that a certain scorn would flash from the servant's eyes. And on one occasion, when both were sitting over the fire together, Paolo had turned sharply round upon him with :

"But she will not be there much longer."

This speech, abrupt and unexpected as it was, had given Leonard's thoughts a totally new direction. Since then, when sitting alone with Céline, he had felt that he could brave anything—his father's wrath, his sisters' scorn, the world's ignominy, to possess this beautiful iceberg, to thaw her with his love.

On this particular February evening Jack Frost was busy spreading a delicate mist over the great city, so that no one of its millions might catch him doing his night's work. As Leonard approached the curiosity-shop he fancied he heard "Old Ben," for so Céline's father was always called, in loud and angry conversation ; but on opening the door, he found him, as usual, alone.

"Good evening, sir. Yes," in answer to Leonard's interrogative motion, "she's in there right enough. But you look here, sir. Don't mind me speaking a bit plain. I know you mean fair and honourable to my daughter, and so I wish you good luck. But she's got her

head full of poetry and nonsense. You try that line with her and see how it will work."

Leonard pushed impatiently past the eager speaker. What did he want with advice? To him the cold shyness of Céline's manner was infinitely more attractive than the kindest smiles, especially when contrasted with Lady Clara's ever-ready affability. The lines of the sonnet were ringing in his head :

"Do I not see that fairest images
Of hardest marble are of purpose made?"

and again :

"Only my pains will be the more to get her ;
But, having her, my joy will be the greater."

And to-night his beautiful statue blushed, perceptibly blushed, as he came in at the low door. He had never seen her blush before, and he could not cease to marvel, for some time after the colour had died away, at the delicacy of the rose-flush that came up over the creamy throat and spread to the straight, low forehead. Then she was kind to him, too ; she gave him her hand, and played to him his favourite air.

Just at parting, as he bent over her to say "Good-bye," she looked up at him with one of those rare, full glances.

"Why do you come here so often?" she said in her sweet voice. "I don't think you ought to—it's not the right kind of place for you."

She had never said so many words to him of her own accord before ; and in spite of their import, Leonard felt wildly exhilarated by them. Did she not know, then, why he came—had she not guessed?

He snatched at both her hands, and grasping them almost cruelly in his own, said hoarsely, quite carried out of himself : "I come because I love you, Céline—because I love, love, love you."

IV.

MRS. CRAWFORD had given a great dance. For days before, the whole house had been in commotion, and her quiet-loving husband had been forced to seek even his meals out of doors. It was not altogether for the amusement of her daughters that the good lady had been persuaded to undertake so much fatigue and trouble. Miss Crawford had some time before had a serious consultation with her mother, in which both had decided that evidently "some little event" was wanted to screw Leonard up to the proper point for proposing for the hand of Lady Clara Hautness. And what so propitious for such a thing as a dance, and one given at his own home, where he could have everything his own way?

The ladies could not but exchange congratulatory smiles and

glances when they saw Leonard lead out the desired partner for dance after dance ; and there was an excitement in his manner, a flush on his cheek, and a sparkle in his eye, which, although not uncommon of late, had never before been so noticeable.

"They are sitting together in the greenhouse ; I think he must be doing it now," Miss Crawford whispered to her mother in passing. And when at last all the guests were gone, and the family sat exhausted round the ruined supper-table, it was no wonder that Mrs. Crawford tapped her son playfully with her fan, and enquired if she were not to "wish him joy?"

Leonard flushed ; and when Fanny suggested how delightful it would be to talk about "my sister-in-law, Lady Clara, you know," he rose abruptly, with something like an oath, and hastily left the room.

Safe in his own quarters he sank into a chair, and letting his head fall into his hands, remained silent for many minutes.

Paolo, who stood beside him, pale as death and literally trembling with excitement, was the first to speak.

"And what has the master done?" he enquired, breathlessly. "What is arranged?"

"Everything," said Leonard, lifting his head with an excited laugh. "Everything ! And to-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow."

His voice dropped away and he seemed sunk in reverie.

"Poor Lady Clara !" he said at last. "She asked me to dine with them to-morrow ! Why to-morrow ? To-morrow night I shall be tossing on the ocean ; and," in an enraptured whisper, "with Céline. But come, Paolo ; there is a great deal to be arranged, and a great deal for you to do. See here," he drew from his breast a pocket-book, "here I have our tickets. I have taken your advice—two saloon tickets for New York. You will pack all you think necessary for the voyage in my small overland, and I shall send you on by an earlier train to-morrow morning to Liverpool to take on the luggage and get everything nice and necessary on board. You understand ; I give you *carte blanche*. Here," handing him the pocket-book, "are our tickets and a good deal of money, about £200, the remains of my allowance. You will use what you want and give me back the book when you meet—*us*," very gently, "in Liverpool. And here," handing him a cheque, "is enough to keep you out of place for three months, so that I may have the chance of re-engaging you at the end of that time—if things go well. For you've been a good servant to me ; more of a friend than a servant. Don't, Paolo, don't !" for Paolo was down on his knees by his master's side, sobbing like a child, and kissing the very hem of his coat.

"See, Paolo," Leonard continued, when he had somewhat pacified him : "I have made out a paper of our trains. You will get to Liverpool about mid-day—and *we*," again that slight hesitation and tenderness of tone—"shall not arrive till six. But as the steamer does not leave the docks till half past seven we shall have plenty of

time. Now I think you understand all, so you can go—and I must write this letter. I suppose I must write a letter of explanation to my father, though it's horribly hard to do. Well, what is it?" as the valet still lingered.

"You will not tell me—you do not like to say," murmured Paolo. "But the young lady—how did she consent?"

"I scarcely know," said Leonard; "I don't think she said anything; but then," with a dreamy joyousness, "she let me say what I would! And her father came in and I told him all my plans, and he was pleased. Of course he was pleased, the cunning old boy. He turned to Céline and said: 'Well, my girl, how shall it be?' And she—she looked straight at him with those wonderful eyes and said: 'Father, it shall be just as *he* says.' Then I would have caught her and kissed her, I was so mad with joy. But she pushed me back and turned her eyes on me with a look I have never seen in them before, and said, oh, so earnestly: 'Thank you. And forgive me—forgive me everything.' Before I knew what she was doing she had taken my hand and kissed it. Then she was gone." And Leonard sat and gazed at the hand with a kind of reverence.

He seemed quite unconscious of any listener to this strange narration, for at its conclusion, when Paolo drew a long breath and murmured something, he started and exclaimed angrily:

"What! Are you still here? Why don't you go and attend to my things?"

And the valet hastened away.

V.

LEONARD was pacing with restless footsteps the platform of a deserted station.

For greater safety, he had agreed to meet Céline at —— Junction, the first halting place of the fast train to Liverpool, which she would take at Euston. This had necessitated his coming down several hours earlier in the day, and he had had time, now that the train was due, to work himself into a perfect fever of excitement and delight.

It seemed almost incredible; but when the great puffing engine should loom in sight he would know that his darling was there. A few more minutes, and he would be beside her, with her, and that for always.

Would she be cold? Would she be silent? Or would she look at him with the soft, sweet smile he loved to fancy? Even at this moment of intense suspense he almost laughed at himself for such trepidation. Why should she be cold any longer? Had he not done everything for her that man could do? Had he not given her his love? Would he not give her his name? Was he not lifting her far out of that sphere which, to such a girl as Céline, must be so unbearable? Leonard was not a man insensible of his advantages. Good looks, youth, health, unlimited money—what could any girl

want more? Was he not thought a desirable match even for an Earl's daughter?

But hark! a distant whistle, growing louder and harsher as it came nearer. The engine rushed into sight. Every turn of the pistons was bringing her nearer.

The train dashed noisily alongside of the now crowded platform, and Leonard hurried to the first-class compartments. He thrust his head in at each window, but Céline was not there. He hastened along the second-class carriages, but still no Céline. Could she have got into a smoking compartment by mistake? A fevered search showed him that these were almost empty. He ran along the third-class compartments, but they only contained some quite poor people, who, from the amount and variety of their packages, were evidently about to emigrate.

"Now, sir, are you ready?" cried the guard, as Leonard returned from a second fruitless inspection of the first-class carriages. "No, sir; I didn't notice no young lady getting in at Euston—pheugh, we're off!" and in a few moments the express had whirled out of sight.

It was most provoking. Céline had missed her train. He cursed the prudence which had left her to perform this part of her journey alone. But what was to be done now? How should he meet her, how could he communicate with her?

At this moment of perplexity a young porter stepped forward and handed Leonard a letter. He tore it open, with a beating heart, and read:—

"Forgive, oh, forgive! We have loved each other for so long a time! Her father would not consent. Your money and your plans have cleared the way, and we have an engagement to play in the same orchestra in—America.

"Your devoted and eternally grateful,

"PAOLO."

For several minutes after reading this extraordinary epistle Leonard remained perfectly stupefied, rooted to the ground. When he had grasped its full meaning his first impulse was for pursuit and vengeance: to tear Céline from Paolo, to hurl Paolo into a shameful prison. But after a hurried examination of the time-table, he found this plan quite unfeasible. The next train for Liverpool from — Junction did not reach its destination till 9.45, and the steamer left the Docks at 7.30. For a moment he thought of telegraphing. But his commonsense and angry, wounded pride, both rebelled against such a proceeding. Even should he succeed in stopping the runaway couple, how should he confront them, and what dignified words could he find with which to upbraid them? It was useless to rage and fume. He summoned the porter, and angrily demanded of him why he had not delivered the letter sooner.

"Because I was paid not to," answered the lad bluntly, and disappeared before Leonard had time to wreak any part of his vengeance on him.

Again and again did Leonard read the few scribbled words, but their meaning was unmistakable. Clearly, also, he was not the only one who had been thus duped. Céline's father was, even at the present moment, under the delusion that his daughter had gone off with a gentleman.—What deceit, what vile hypocrisy! He struck the hand that seemed to burn still with the kiss she had pressed upon it. And he to have been fooled, tricked, by this girl! To have been made her dupe, her tool!

His regret at her loss speedily gave way to this scornful anger as he recognised the full extent of his wrongs. How they must both have laughed at him behind his back, his good servant and his lovely lady! "His plans"—yes, that meant his money, his berths. That he himself, his money and his very passion should have been thus used by the unscrupulous pair for the carrying out of their designs! It was insupportable.

But what a mercy that his letter to his father was still unposted! He drew it from his pocket and tore it into a thousand fragments. And Lady Clara?—Her invitation for dinner.—Was he even now too late?

Another hurried inspection of the time-table.—Ah, no! At least everything was not up with him.

"Father," said Leonard, late that night, as he sat smoking and sipping in Mr. Crawford's private room: "I've arranged a marriage with Lady Clara Hautness."

"Have you, my boy?" was the undisturbed answer. "That seems very right."

"Yes, and that scamp Paolo has made off with my quarter's allowance."

"Indeed! Well, there's plenty more where that came from," said the philosophic old gentleman.

And Leonard wondered whether even the announcement of his elopement with Céline would have roused his father from that lethargic calm.



OUR YOUNGER BROTHERS.

BY ROSA MACKENZIE KETTLE, AUTHOR OF "SMUGGLERS AND FORESTERS,"
"THE MISTRESS OF LANGDALE HALL," &c. &c.

I DO not believe that my temper is a bad one—I am certain my brothers are not half so good-humoured ; but I must own I was vexed when I heard it asserted, the other day, that the best way in which a gentleman could obtain insight into the character of a lady whom he seriously admired, was through listening to the conversation and studying the tastes and pursuits of her younger brothers.

Now it is quite impossible that anyone—though he were the most learned of men—could understand this subject better than myself ; for though I am only five-and-twenty, I have eight younger brothers, of different ages and dispositions, not one of whom, I maintain, is in the least like me.

My friends have frequently remarked upon this difference ; and, I confess, I have taken it as a compliment. Anybody who has heard Philip and Frank arguing about the merits of their respective universities ; Stephen and Arthur fighting over and over again their wordy battles about Rugby and Harrow ; Tom and Jack plaguing our poor mother to death with their constant disagreements and impertinence to the old family servants ; or even my dear little brothers in the nursery quarrelling which of them should be dressed first, or lie in bed the longest, would own that it *is* hard to be judged of through the medium of a host of ill-mannered boys !

Only fancy Major Howard, or Captain Claxton, giving up a waltz with me for the purpose of studying my tastes, habits, and sentiments through the agreeable revelations of my young brothers' mischievous propensities ! Do I ever steal fruit, and glory in the achievement ? or persistently give up washing my hands ? or fill my apron-pockets with all sorts of horrors ? or smoke ? or gamble ? as, I am sorry to say, Frank did at Cambridge, when our parents had such sleepless nights and miserable days, before he turned over a new leaf, and—as he phrased it—went in for hard reading. Neither, I am afraid, should I have passed such a capital examination as he did afterwards, turning all our sorrow into joy.

Neither have I escaped so narrowly as Philip did when so many of his college friends showed him the way from Oxford to Rome, and he tried hard to make me understand all his Anglican notions, which, after all, were not materially different from our father and mother's teaching, and did him no harm in the end, though our aunts were terribly frightened at what they called his Ritualistic practices. He is a brave, good man now, working hard in his suburban curacy, and has got over his boyish nonsense.

To a generous, reflecting person it must appear wonderful that a girl like myself, blessed with eight brothers, ever obtains serious admiration ; and it would seem cruel to interpose obstacles between her and a happy settlement in life.

That young clergyman at the Lakes, last year, of whom mamma was disposed to speak so highly, never looked at me again after hearing that my little brothers, in whom, during our passage in the steamer from Bowness to Ambleside, he took quite an affectionate interest, rejoiced in the suggestive names of Septimus and Octavius !

Not that I cared ; on the contrary, the dear little fellows were quite a protection ; but I should very much like to know what insight into my peculiar idiosyncrasy would have been gained by listening to their infantine squabbles ?

All I know is that I am expected to amuse my brothers when they return from school or college ; to assist in mending and making their garments, and to keep my temper when they tease me about my few admirers, my favourite books, and my small modicum of amusement. The whole household is upset by their plans for boating, shooting, and lawn-tennis parties ; and, everywhere, Amy is wanted, and willing to help them. But I deny that in all their boastings, chaffings and wranglings, or boyish mysteries, there is the very faintest resemblance to the manners, habits and sentiments of their one only sister.

I love all the boys dearly, and I would willingly shield them from blame at almost any cost ; bear their rough jokes, and forward their amusements ; but as to being like them—I deny the charge. Women are self-denying, from necessity, if not choice, especially in large families. It is a matter of course that sisters must give way to their brothers when they come home from school or college, and in the other short holidays of masculine life. I warn you, ye over-prudent suitors, who seek to read our characters through the conversation of our juvenile brothers, that it is not until we are emancipated from home duties that our dispositions are fully developed. If you cannot rely upon your own powers of observation, credit still less the babbling of those wretched boys !

Amanda, after being a perfect slave to her brothers, may retaliate upon a slave of her own, if she has the luck to get one. If anyone knew how tired I often am of sewing on buttons, and stitching collars and wristbands for my eight brothers, they would doubt, in spite of their praise of my industry, whether, after marriage, I might not consign similar labours to my lady's-maid or housekeeper, more quickly than the rich man's only daughter and heiress, who never had eight brothers to destroy her romantic, illusions about working for one beloved object, or to incriminate her by their laziness.

Am I to be found guilty because Jack does not come down to breakfast till ten o'clock, when, in all probability, I have been up and dressed before eight, preparing his books for study and learning his lessons, in order to make them more easy for him ?

And yet, when I catch sight of myself in the glass, as I did just now, half crying at the unkindness of the remarks which so sting me, I can detect a likeness which I shall not disown now, nor will it ever rise up against me. Out of our number, large as it still remains, one has been taken, and, I think, the missing one *did* resemble me. Mamma always said that Alfred and Amy were just alike.

Most likely it was so, since we were twins ; yet one was taken, the other left. I think if anyone could speak to him—to my little angel-brother—he would bear witness in my favour ; he would say that I was not an unkind, careless sister ; and in his tones, his words, his looks, there was, there ever will be, an echo of my own. In my heart I hear always that child-voice saying, as it did before we parted in this world for ever : “ Sister Amy, sister Amy, stay with me, be like me, take care of me through the dark valley—I cannot go alone—let me have my twin-sister with me.”

But this is an episode I never meant to wander into. Twins are set apart and usually resemble each other, but our younger brothers are not—cannot be our prototypes. Redolent of school, troublesome, noisy, insubordinate, they make us slaves and keep us in slavery.

“ Do not contradict Jack ; he is going back to school to-morrow, poor fellow,” says our tender mother.

“ Let the boys alone,” growls our Paterfamilias. “ Do learn to humour your brothers, Amy, during their short holidays ;” or, “ Don’t you see that Tom will break that little cane chair if he twists himself into such contortions ? You can lie on the sofa when your brothers are not at home.”

“ Marianne will certainly give warning if the boys keep the breakfast-things so long on the table ;” or “ if Jack does not wipe his boots on the mat ;” or “ If Arthur persists in teasing the cat and making her jump on the tables.”

“ Your father is *so* angry with Philip to-day. Should you mind giving up the Popular Concert this one evening, Amy ? He is always in a better humour when you are at home ? Your brother goes back to Oxford next week.”

“ Don’t open the piano to practise when your brothers are all at home. You know they ought to be busy in the morning.”

Then all the confidential parental tributes to our brothers’ claims and merits, to which we listen and give our assent resignedly.

Perhaps, after all, I ought to have been satisfied with the curt reply, made on the spot, to the mischievous harangue to which I had been an unobserved listener, as it seems to me that it contained the whole gist of the matter :

“ It strikes me that men who find their sweethearts’ younger brothers interesting companions must have gone too far to draw back.”

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER III.

A LONG TALK.

A BRIGHT evening had followed the fair day when Godwin Earle took his way to Clarges Street. The old London pomp was going on all around him ; he had seen it all over and over again, and yet he was now looking at it with a new interest. It did not disgust him this evening ; he could be tranquilly amused by the vulgar swagger of wealth that glittered and blazed, and outshone the quiet glow of birth and breeding. He knew everybody by sight ; the young fresh faces that had only just "come out," and had not yet lost their first bloom ; the older faces, with weary eyes tired of looking at the vain show ; the bored men, perched high, driving splendid horses ; and the cheery old fogies who found life interesting because so little of it was left to them. In his present genial mood he could make allowances for them all ; and regard their follies with kindly toleration.

It must be confessed that he was a little surprised at Mr. Corder's choice of an abode. He had fancied that the old merchant was a man who shunned fashionable neighbourhoods, and hated fashionable ways. And when he was shown into the room and received by his host, there were other surprises awaiting him.

It was evident, in the first place, that old Corder had taste ; and a taste of a very sober and quiet kind. He had surrounded himself with subdued colours, warm and soft, and had brightened his walls with one or two charming little pictures. There was no display of wealth ; no sign of that pride of money which is, after all, the most disgusting sort of pride. If he had gathered a few pretty things about him, it was simply because he took an honest pleasure in their prettiness, and knew that a solitary life is greatly influenced by its surroundings.

The dinner was excellent, but unostentatious. There was a small round table, a little tasteful silver and glass, and a few flowers ; and the spare, dry old man was a pleasant host, talking quietly and sensibly on the topics of the day. Godwin was conscious of being wonderfully soothed and gratified. Here was a man who knew how to befriend you without making you writhe under a sense of patronage.

Later on, they sat near the old-fashioned bay-window overlooking

the street, and smoked their cigarettes in the soft glow of evening light. Then a man-servant placed a shaded lamp on a table at the far end of the long, low room ; stirred a morsel of glowing coal in the grate, and noiselessly retired. And Godwin felt that the time for a serious business conversation had come at last.

"And now," said his host, sinking back, a little wearily, into his easy chair, "I should like, if you are willing to take me into your confidence, to know something more about yourself. Tell me just as much as you please, and no more. But I think you know that I have no idle curiosity to satisfy ; I wish to help you."

Godwin, who was seated in another easy chair, and felt delightfully comfortable, was not unwilling to talk about himself. For more than twelve months he had been tossed about, like a shuttlecock, by hopes and fears ; rushing here and there in search of employment ; realizing the bitterness of disappointment in every possible form. This quiet old man inspired him with a sense of trust.

"I shall have to tell you a long story," he replied ; and as he spoke, he, too, sank back into the cushioned chair, and the evening light fell softly on his worn face. "A part of it, I believe, you have heard already. You know how I came home from India with Sir Albert Lane, and how, after his death, I went to stay with my aunts at Fairbridge ?"

"Yes. And Sir Albert left you nothing ?"

"He had nothing to leave : he was a man who had always lived up to his means. With him, as you know, my hope of getting a good government appointment expired ; and I made up my mind to take the first berth that could be found. I went to Fairbridge, partly because it was the only home I had ever known, and partly for health's sake. But afterwards I wished, bitterly enough, that I had never set foot inside Meadow House ! My Aunt Caroline had come from Russia with her daughter, and things were not changed for the better."

"Why not have gone to your Uncle, Canon Earle ?"

Godwin smiled.

"My Uncle Earle," he said, "is an old bachelor, and never permits his peace to be broken for anyone. He lives in his cosy old house in Alderminster, under the shadow of the Cathedral, and allows my aunts to occupy Meadow House."

"I did not know that Meadow House belonged to him," remarked Mr. Corder.

"Yes ; he is the elder son, and had the best of the family property. My father was some years younger. As Uncle Horace has not married, it was always said that Meadow House would eventually come to me ; but I shall never have it now."

"Who is to have it, then ?" inquired Mr. Corder, with much interest.

"It will probably go to Olga Gradizoff ; that is what my Aunt

Caroline has been diligently scheming for. I must tell you that the Countess Gradizoff is a disappointed woman. Her husband did not leave her the fortune she had expected, and her married life was a stormy one. After the Count died, she chose to take up her abode with her sisters, and in a very short time she became the mistress of the house, and ruled everything. They yielded to her for the sake of peace, I suppose. And it is to her, and her accursed suspicions, that I owe all my troubles."

"Ah, I have heard that the Countess Gradizoff is not an easy person to live with," said Mr. Corder, quietly. "And she didn't like you?"

"No; she detested me, even as a child. I offended her by being looked upon as the future master of Meadow House. And when I found that she had returned from Russia, and established herself in her old house, I began to fear that she would make mischief."

"And what of her daughter?"

"Olga is a mere child of fifteen or sixteen. She was always with her governess—a poor Polish girl, who was quite a slave to the Countess."

"And those suspicions that you spoke of—what were they?" asked Mr. Corder, after a slight pause.

A quick flush shot across Godwin's face, but he answered with composure:

"They were suspicions that will rather astonish you, I fancy. The Countess pretends to be morally convinced that I stole a certain ruby necklace, which had belonged to Count Gradizoff, and was said to have been valued at five thousand pounds. Out of consideration for the name of Earle, she declines to take any steps for the recovery of the necklace. 'Let the whole affair be hushed up,' she says, when she is urged to set the detectives to work. I need hardly tell you that I have done all I can to prove my innocence; but the thing has never been traced. And my Aunt Caroline has been clever and malignant enough to make Canon Earle and her sisters believe in my guilt. She always had an extraordinary power over the minds of her relations. If she detests anyone, they are invariably made to dislike him too."

"I have had a hint of this matter before," said the merchant, in his quiet voice. "But I did not of course know how serious it really was. There is an old gardener whom I pay to keep my poor children's graves in order in Fairbridge churchyard. He called on me a month or two ago, and said that he fancied the Countess's temper had driven you away from Meadow House. At one time he lived in the Miss Earles' service, and I suppose he still contrives to pick up bits of their household news."

"That must be poor old Rouse. He was my Aunts' gardener years back. The old fellow used to be fond of me, I remember."

"Yet I don't understand how the Countess Gradizoff, with all her

powers, could succeed in fixing such a suspicion on you. It seems perfectly monstrous," said Mr. Corder.

"Appearances were decidedly against me," replied Godwin, with perfect frankness. "And she hated me quite enough to have been misled by appearances. She was perpetually swaggering about her jewels, especially about this ruby necklace which had once belonged to a noble Polish family. I never knew exactly how Count Gradizoff had obtained possession of the necklace, but I believe its former owner narrowly escaped Russian vengeance. Anyhow, the Countess was so fond of descanting upon its splendours, that my other aunts got nervous, and declared it ought to be put into safe keeping. My evil genius must have prompted me, I suppose, for I was fool enough to offer to take care of the infernal thing. The curse of the pillaged Pole must have clung to it, I verily believe!"

"And did the Countess readily accept your offer?"

"Yes. Her sisters had really made her nervous, I fancy. There was no manifest ill-feeling between Aunt Caroline and myself at that time, although I knew she did not like me."

Godwin paused, drew a long breath, and sat upright. Hitherto he had managed to keep all emotion out of his voice and manner; but it was no easy matter to control the rising passion that was struggling for an outlet. His host, moved by the most genuine sympathy, looked away from the young man's troubled face, and waited for him to speak again.

"There was a strong box—it had belonged to Uncle Albert—in my room," young Earle continued. "Well, I told the Countess I would lock up her necklace in that box; and one evening she brought it to me, and solemnly entrusted it to my care. Aunt Jane and Dorothy had a great deal to say about their sense of relief. Such a thing was far too valuable to be kept in a woman's dressing-case, they declared, and they had always been afraid that Caroline would give it to Olga, the child had begged for it so often. Moreover, it was such a comfort to know that Godwin never slept without loaded pistols in his room. I remember laughing at this, because the pistols were *not* loaded; and then I said good-night to them all, and went away with the rubies."

"Did any of the servants know where the necklace was to be kept?" asked Mr. Corder, eagerly.

"I think not. Anyhow, I could never find it in my heart to suspect one of them; they had all lived for years in the family, and were really attached to me. Well, to go back to that night, as soon as my door was shut I got out my keys, opened the strong box, and put the morocco case, which contained the necklace, into an unoccupied corner of the box. Then, when I had made all secure, I returned the keys to my pocket, and went to bed with an easy conscience. But that was the last I ever saw of the Gradizoff necklace!"

"What! You never saw it again?"

"Never. Three or four days went by, and my mind was fully occupied with my own affairs. As I was perfectly sure that the thing was safe, I did not trouble to look at it. The iron box contained nothing else that was particularly valuable; but there were private papers in it which I had judged it wise to put into a secure place. It must, I fancy, have been nearly a week after I took charge of the necklace, that I received a letter from one of Sir Albert Lane's old friends. There was a chance, it seemed, of obtaining a secretaryship which had just become vacant, and I was advised to go up to town."

"And you went, of course?" said Mr. Corder.

"I went, and stayed two days. But it was just the old story of blighted hopes, and the secretaryship had been promised before I applied for it. It is not necessary to say that I came back in bad spirits, and let everyone see that I was in a gloomy mood. Evening had set in when I returned, and I was tired as well as depressed; yet that was the time chosen by the Countess to ask me to produce the necklace. I must own that the request, coming just then, irritated me strangely; I did not want to have the trouble of opening the iron box, and I did want to shut myself up and be alone. 'Won't to-morrow do?' I asked."

Mr. Corder was listening earnestly.

"My Aunt Caroline replied that to-morrow would do; but that she thought, on the whole, it would be better to take the necklace into her own keeping again at once. It was a sort of heir-loom; she wanted to look at it very often, and found she could not endure that it should be out of her sight. I told her, a little curtly I'm afraid, that she should have it before breakfast next day, and then I went off to my room for the night."

"And the night passed just as usual?" Mr. Corder asked.

"Rather more wretchedly than usual. I was wakeful, and a blank future seemed to stare me in the face. Naturally, I rose the next morning looking heavy and miserable, and had half finished dressing before I remembered the necklace. I was late; the bell was ringing for family prayers; and to miss prayers was to offend the aunts mortally. Still, I wasn't ready, and I had to make up my mind to face their cold displeasure; it couldn't be helped. Then, in a very ill humour, I took out my keys, and went to the iron box."

"Did the key turn easily in the lock? Was there the slightest difficulty in opening it?"

"Not the slightest. As soon as the lid was raised, I put my hand into the corner where I had deposited the morocco case. *It was not there.* There's no need to say, I suppose, that at first I utterly refused to accept the fact of its disappearance, and rummaged among the papers till I was sick and tired. Then, for a few minutes, I believe I was completely bewildered. My impression is, that the shock inflicted upon me took away my thinking and feeling power, and left me absolutely stupefied."

He stopped to take breath, and the old man noticed that his face was deadly pale.

"I can vaguely remember their faces when I entered the breakfast-room," Godwin went on at last. "All their eyes were upon me. Aunt Jane had assumed her well-known stony look of reproach; Aunt Dorothy sighed and moaned. This was their manner of reminding me that I had not appeared at prayer-time; but I did not give them a chance to utter one word. What I did was to walk straight up to Caroline Gradizoff, and say, in a stupid, wooden way: 'Your ruby necklace is gone.' Of the outburst of exclamations that followed this announcement of mine, I have not the faintest recollection. I cannot even recall the answers that I made to their frantic questions. The scene seems to shift suddenly from the breakfast-room to my bed-room again, and I see them all crowding round the iron box, that stands open, just as I had left it on discovering the loss."

"This is a painful story," said Mr. Corder, kindly; "and it costs you a good deal to tell it. Yet I am glad—more glad than I can say—that you have been willing to confide in me so unreservedly."

Godwin rose, and began walking restlessly up and down the room. The contrast between the old man's sympathy, and the merciless suspicion with which his own relations had treated him, was never more deeply felt than at this moment. For some seconds he could not trust himself to speak, but Mr. Corder rightly interpreted the silence, and waited quietly for him to go on with his tale.

"You know it is a common saying," he proceeded sadly, "that innocence often looks wonderfully like guilt. As days went on, and I began to realise that my aunts did really believe me guilty of the theft, I became conscious of an ever-increasing sense of degradation which made me partly incapable of vigorous self-defence. I was almost persuaded that there must needs be something noticeably vile and mean in my nature, else they would never have condemned me, even on the strongest circumstantial evidence. On looking back upon that time, I see that my dejection and bewilderment must have told fearfully against me; and yet—Good heaven! how could they have dared to think that their own brother's son was a thief?"

"You say," remarked Mr. Corder, "that it was the Countess who influenced the minds of the others. Now, does it not strike you as being very odd that she should have accepted her loss so philosophically? Would any other woman of her stamp have sacrificed valuable family property for the sake of hiding a nephew's disgrace? Does it seem a natural thing that she should let you enjoy the fruits of your ill-gotten gains in peace? My belief is, that from first to last she was perfectly aware of your innocence."

But Godwin shook his head, and slowly took another turn in the room.

"No," he said, thoughtfully. "Aunt Caroline really believed me

guilty. As to her determination to hush up the matter, that can, I think, be easily explained. I am morally certain that my aunts, Jane and Dorothy, and my Uncle Horace, agreed to pay her the full value of the necklace as the price of her silence. They are people who would make any sacrifice to smother a family scandal."

Mr. Corder rested his head upon his hand, and sat absorbed in thought. He had heard, in bygone times, a great deal about the Countess and her ways from the lips of her sister Grace, and he believed that Grace was a better judge of her nature than Godwin Earle could ever be. In fact there were few base and dishonourable actions of which he could not have imagined her capable. And yet, as he had never once seen nor spoken to Caroline Gradizoff he felt that his opinion of her character must appear worthless to Godwin. Mr. Corder had only looked at her with Grace's eyes, while Godwin's knowledge of her was derived from daily intercourse. Nevertheless, the old merchant was obstinately convinced that he understood this woman, and that young Earle did not.

"What if there has been no robbery at all?" he asked, suddenly looking up. "What if the Countess contrived to steal her own necklace out of your box? Was it not possible for her to have found a key that would fit the lock?"

"No, no." Godwin spoke with a melancholy smile. "The lock was a peculiar one. As I have already told you, the box belonged to Sir Albert Lane, and had been used by him for keeping important documents. No common lock would have answered his purpose, of course; and as to my own keys, they were never once out of my possession. Moreover, I am certain that the Countess, much as she dislikes me, would not have dreamt of playing any tricks. It is only in novels that these things are done."

"But *some* hand must have stolen the key of your strong box. If not hers, whose hand was it? By the way, did you sleep with your keys under your pillow?"

"No; I had only a very small bunch, and they were always in my waistcoat pocket. At night I put my clothes on a chair, close to my bedside, and within my reach. I know you are thinking that some one might have got into the room while I was asleep; but that was impossible. All the while I was at Meadow House I had wretched nights. Remember that I was a bitterly disappointed man, haunted by a thousand regrets and fears, without a place in the world, without any certain prospect before me. Remember, too, that my health had suffered severely from my residence in India; and then ask yourself whether I was likely to enjoy the blessing of perfect repose? If I ever had the luck to doze, the slightest sound was enough to wake me. I used to toss as if my bed were a furnace; I sometimes got up and paced the floor for hours."

"Did you never have recourse to opiates?" asked Mr. Corder.

"Never. I have always had a horror of anything of the kind."

Mr. Corder rose in his turn, and went over to the fast-expiring fire. The May evening was chilly, and the old man stirred the coals into a blaze before he spoke again.

"Think," he said, standing with his back to the chimney-piece, and looking earnestly at his guest. "Think, Mr. Earle. Try to remember. Did you not have one good night while you were staying at Meadow House? Take time to consider my question."

There was a silence. And then Godwin Earle looked back at him with the first appearance of embarrassment that he had betrayed that evening.

"I do remember," he answered hesitatingly. "There was one night when I had a sound sleep. But, Mr. Corder, I did not owe that sleep to any opiate. The simple truth is that I went to bed happier than I had ever hoped to be again; my nerves were quieted, and my mind soothed; and so I slept."

He paused. His host's keen eyes were still fixed upon him with a look of intense interest, and after a slight struggle with himself, the young man went on speaking.

CHAPTER IV.

BEGIN AGAIN.

THE glow of sunset, which had lingered long, even in the London street, was now rapidly fading away. Within the last half-hour the shades of dusk had deepened fast, and Mr. Corder silently welcomed the soft twilight for Godwin's sake. Full of sympathy and delicate consideration, the old merchant seated himself in a low chair on the hearth, with his back to the shaded lamp-light. And the young man, still pacing up and down the long room, could see little beyond the outlines of his figure and face.

"You may as well hear all the details of this dreary story of mine," said Godwin, making a vain attempt to speak lightly. "I daresay you have already guessed what is coming next. Before I went to India, Mr. Corder, I fell in love with a girl in Fairbridge. And, wonderful to relate, she was the very girl that my relations had already set their hopes upon for me! As you may suppose, I was in high favour in those days. Sir Albert Lane had done all that was expected, and had taken me warmly by the hand. And Miss Lindrick had accepted me on certain conditions. These conditions were reasonable enough, you will say. She was an only daughter, and an heiress: and her father stipulated that we should not be definitely engaged till I had won an established position. I was so sanguine in those days that I was not troubled in the least about Colonel Lindrick's cautious restrictions. She loved me; I was on the high road to good fortune; and in a year or two I thought I could come home and claim her. You see I fully believed in my luck. I started in life

with the utmost confidence, firmly persuaded that the stars in their courses would fight for me and win an easy victory."

Mr. Corder's thoughts had strayed back again to the bright school-boy with his fresh face and winning ways, and his heart swelled with compassion and regret. He might lift this young man out of the Slough of Despond, and set his feet upon firm ground. Yes; but he could never give him back the believing spirit of his vanished youth.

Great as his power of helpfulness really was, it could not go beyond certain limits. And silently and bitterly he was realising that it is easier to mend a broken fortune than to heal a bruised heart.

Still trying to sustain that painful pretence of lightness, Godwin went on with his tale, never stopping in his walk up and down the room, and never once looking towards the quiet figure sitting in the shade.

"Well," he continued, bitterly, "you know that the stars did not fight for me after all, and I came back to Fairbridge in the character of a vanquished man. Miss Lindrick was sympathetic and tender still; but—'her mother was steel, and her father was stone,'—and for months we had few opportunities of meeting alone. But at last there came a certain summer evening when Aunt Dorothy (who has a good deal of ladylike tact) was clever enough to get her to dine at Meadow House, and kind enough to give me my chance afterwards. Miss Lindrick and I had a quiet talk in the back drawing-room, while the others were chatting over their coffee-cups; and the result of that talk was the renewal of my confidence and hope. She would wait for me, she said; she would never lose her trust and patience; and, not having quite parted with my old credulity, I believed her, and was comforted. That night I had a sound sleep, and was late for breakfast the next morning."

"Does the tie between you still exist?" asked Mr. Corder softly. He had forgotten for a time the mystery of the stolen necklace, and was thinking only of the love story.

"No." Godwin's voice dropped to a low, stern tone. "I had a letter—it came two days ago—telling me that she could write no more, and saying, gently enough, that it would be best for us to forget each other. That was all. I knew that the false accusation had done its work, and that she had resolved to banish the suspected man from her heart. In some way—I don't know how—she has heard of the suspicion that rests upon me, and it has helped her to come to a decision. I ought to have been prepared for this blow. Her letters have shown changes of mood and touches of uncertainty for months past. But somehow one never *is* prepared."

He came to a pause in his walk and stood motionless, leaning against the wall, with his eyes fixed upon the floor.

"Shall I go on and tell you all the rest?" he said at last. "Yes; there is no reason why you should not hear everything. After I had read that letter, I felt that my evil fate had won the day, and I

resolved that I would not live with the taint of the vile slander always clinging to my name. You know—every man who has done with youth *must* know—that life, even at its best, is hardly worth living.”

He waited, evidently expecting some reply ; and Mr. Corder’s quiet voice came out of the shadows.

“It never is worth living, if we live only for self’s sake. I found that out long ago.”

“Ah, you have the power of helping others. A man can never be quite miserable while that remains,” Godwin continued. “But I was beggared, slandered, deserted ; and I felt that the world had no place for me. Well, I won’t weary you with a long history of my thoughts and feelings ; they are not worth telling, Heaven knows ! It is enough to say that I had sufficient respect for my father’s name and memory to make it appear that his son had died by accident. After travelling all night, I got out at a little country station, and walked across fields, just before sunrise, to meet the next down train. And then I placed myself upon the line.”

“Good Heavens !” dropped breathlessly from Mr. Corder’s lips. “It must have been a miracle that saved you !”

“It was almost a miracle. I had been standing on the line some minutes when a young girl climbed the embankment, and attempted to drag me away. You must try to picture the scene for yourself, for I cannot put it into any words. At this moment I could scarcely believe that it was *I* who stood there, grimly determined to die, and resolved that those weak little hands should not turn me from my purpose. But the hands were not so weak as they seemed, and I was hardly brutal enough to put out all my strength. There was a struggle ; she would not give way, and clung to me with frantic force. And then—then, before I realised that it was indeed so near, I saw the train rushing fast upon us both, and knew that if I perished, she must share my fate.”

Again he paused, this time to take breath. He had told his story with wonderful calmness ; but, in the twilight, Mr. Corder saw him pass his hand across his face.

“It was ordained that we were both to be saved, I suppose ; the bad was spared for the sake of the good,” he went on, quietly. “But how our escape was effected, I can’t tell you ; the whole thing seems like the wildest of dreams. It must have been a desperate leap of mine that got us clear of the line.”

The story had been almost too much for the old merchant, and, strong of nerve as he was, he heaved a deep sigh of relief at its conclusion. A man less accustomed to study human nature might have thought it is duty to “improve the occasion,” and read Godwin Earle a severe lecture on the sin which he had so nearly committed ; but Mr. Corder was wise enough to see that no words of his were needed here. He rose slowly from his easy chair in the shadows, went over to the table, and filled two glasses with wine. Yet as

Godwin took the glass from his hand, he saw that the old man's eyes were resting upon him with an earnest interest, and knew that many an unspoken warning was conveyed in that kindly glance.

"I wonder how the Ancient Mariner felt when he had told *his* tale?" said Godwin, with a smile. "Somewhat as I do now, I fancy. It's to be hoped that I sha'n't be condemned to tell my story periodically, isn't it? I'm afraid I have given you a dismal evening."

"I have spent a good many dismal evenings alone with my own sorrows," answered Mr. Corder, gently. "And you know I insisted on hearing all your troubles. I am not quite satisfied yet, you will see. This girl who saved you, who is she? What has become of her? Shall you ever meet her again?"

"Three questions easily answered. The girl is a Miss Ward, and she has come up to town to live with her old governess, a Mrs. Milton, who has a house in Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square. I mean to call on her to-morrow."

Mr. Corder gave a short exclamation of satisfaction.

"Call on her by all means," he said, cheerfully. "My old friend Milton is one of the best of men, and his wife is an excellent woman. Mrs. Milton is a good many years younger than her husband, and his marriage seems to have renewed his youth. As to Miss Ward, I think they are prepared to receive her as a daughter."

"Then you know these people?" said Godwin, in surprise.

"I have known Richard Milton for years, and have watched his life with a good deal of interest. He succeeded, when very young, to his father's prosperous wine-business; but it was easy to see that it would not continue to prosper in his hands. He is one of those men who can never be masters—men who are born to serve and not to rule, and whose instincts lead them to exchange ruling for serving. When Richard Milton was distressed to the last degree, he came to me and asked me to buy his business. My son, who was then living, had always had a fancy for the wine trade; and I did buy the concern, chiefly for Frank's sake. Milton quietly stepped down from his position as master to the post of manager, and things very soon began to go well. They have done so well, indeed, that we are now in want of another head in the office; and, if you are willing, I shall be glad to give you a place there."

"I am more than willing." Godwin's voice was a little unsteady now. "I am more grateful than I can tell you, Mr. Corder. If I can find work to do I shall do it with all my might."

"Ay, that's right, that's right. Take my advice, it is contained in two short words—*begin again*. Last night you had made up your mind to throw your life away, and you were turned from your purpose by a power greater than your own. My boy, you must keep the life; but you must let some of its old memories and associations go. Fling them from you; start afresh with new ideas, new interests, and

new hopes. Turn your back upon the past ; steadily resolve to forget those who have distrusted and deserted you. Put your faith in God, and in your own honest efforts, and *begin again*."

"I will try," said Godwin, speaking as frankly and simply as the school-boy of old might have spoken. "But there is the false accusation—whatever else is forgotten, I shall remember that to the end of my days."

"Patience ; you may find means to clear yourself yet." Mr. Corder's thoughts flowed back into their former channel. "I can't give up the belief that you have been the victim of a shameful fraud. Did no suspicions attach to any of the servants?"

"They were all old servants who had been known and trusted for years," Godwin replied.

"By the way, there was a governess ; a Polish girl, I think?"

"Poor Miss Lorenski ! She was a silent, inoffensive little thing ; and not over-stocked with brains, I fancy. I don't think Olga Gradizoff ever learnt much from her ; the Countess always declared that she had taken Miss Lorenski out of charity."

"Yet the Countess has not a charitable reputation," remarked Mr. Corder, with a doubtful smile.

"Well, no ; I should say not. My other aunts are inclined to be stingy, but Caroline Gradizoff is positively grasping. As to that poor Lorenski girl, she was more of an upper lady's maid than anything else. I used to see her sewing and mending from morning till night, but I hardly ever heard the sound of her voice."

"Was she ever employed in any household duties?"

"I scarcely know. Yes ; I do remember that Aunt Jane, who felt old age creeping on, often gave her little things to do. She was rather a favourite with the old ladies on account of her submissive-ness, and her cleverness in smartening up their caps. I can't tell you anything more about her. And now I must thank you once more for all your kindness, and say good-night."

"Good-night." Mr. Corder shook Godwin warmly by the hand. "You will come to me in Aldersgate Street at ten to-morrow morning? I want to introduce you to Milton, and put you into your new position without delay."

"I hope I sha'n't exhaust your patience," said Godwin, pausing at the door. "There will be a great deal to learn."

"And plenty of time for learning. One moment. Did you ever hear the name of the original owner of the ruby necklace? You said that it once belonged to a Polish nobleman."

"I have heard the name. Godwin stood still and reflected. "But I daresay it has slipped out of my mind, although the Countess mentioned it often enough. Ah, I have it now—it was Gliska !"

And then the door closed, and the young man sauntered homeward under the stars, thinking seriously over those two words of advice which his old friend had spoken.

"Begin again." After all, the counsel was hardly so difficult to follow as it seemed. To Godwin Earle, this beginning again was made easier than it is to most of us when we want to forget the past. So many startling things had happened in a short space of time, that his attention was forced away from the exclusive contemplation of his own disappointments.

He had loved Alma Lindrick deeply and truly, with all the strength of a man's first love, and had never doubted, until misfortune came upon him, that he was sincerely loved in return. If he had prospered in his career—if fate had been as kind as he had once expected, he might have gone through life without discovering any flaw in Alma's affection. Her love was of the sort that lasts very well if it is not exposed to rough weather. Like certain fabrics, it would retain its gloss and beauty if you were careful only to wear it in the sunshine; but the first heavy shower destroyed its brightness, and made you feel ashamed of your own folly in choosing such a bad bargain. And shame was, perhaps, the dominant feeling in Godwin's mind when he remembered that Alma had actually been his ideal woman for years. He had thought of her always as a model of constancy and gentle firmness; able to hold her own against the temptations which are sure to assail a girl who is reputed to be an heiress.

Her letter, coming as the last straw upon an intolerable load of troubles, had completely broken down his powers of reasoning and thinking; and he had been over-mastered by a frantic impatience which almost amounted to insanity. But now—now that a friend's hand had grasped his again, and a friend's voice had promised help and comfort, he was capable of passing a calm judgment on Alma and her conduct, and looking at last with critical eyes on the girl whom he had loved so long and well.

He was sure, even now, that she cared for him as much as it was in her nature to care for anyone. He remembered (still with a pang) that evening hour in the back drawing-room at Meadow House, and recalled every trifling detail of the little scene which had been enacted there, just as clearly as if he had been once more in the old room. He heard the familiar voices on the other side of the half-closed folding-doors, and felt the clasp of Alma's slender hand as it lay locked in his own. He could even recall, with a smile, the inopportune entrance of Miss Lorenski, who had come in, humbly and timidly, with two cups of coffee, and had been so particular in giving him the cup that had no cream in it. He had said something to Alma about the stupid intrusion, and she had taken the part of the poor Polish girl with that gentle sweetness which had always charmed him. And then he had kissed his old sweetheart for the last time; never dreaming that it was indeed a farewell kiss.

But even as the picture rose up before him, his lip curled in sorrowful disgust at Alma's weakness. She had been tried by the tests that many women have triumphantly passed through, and her

love had utterly failed. Truly old Corder has spoken wisely when he had said "begin again."

Quite suddenly the vision of Alma Lindrick faded away, and another woman's face, very unlike hers, seemed to be hovering near him as he walked along the West-End streets. This face was full and soft, and the eyes and lips were grave in repose, although they could brighten and smile with girlish gaiety. It came before him again, later on, in his own room, when he looked at Alma's photograph, still in its frame upon the mantelpiece; and Miss Lindrick's aquiline nose and thin lips, gave place to the softer features of his travelling-companion.

But the church clocks in the neighbourhood of Bulstrode Street were striking eleven, and Godwin had to remind himself that if he was to begin life afresh to-morrow, he must get a rest to-night. Hope is a good opiate, and the head which had tossed restlessly on the pillow for many nights, was quiet at last. The heart, so long tormented by uncertainties, had found at length the repose that often comes when an old desire is given up for ever, and Godwin's sleep was peaceful and sweet.

The faithful servant had been patiently belabouring his door for some seconds before he opened his eyes. The young man sat up with a bewildered face, and slowly remembered everything. Events seemed to come creeping back into his memory, one by one. His engagement with Alma Lindrick was broken off; he had tried to commit suicide; he had met with Beatrice Ward; he had found a staunch friend in old Corder; and he had to begin a new career in a City office that very day.

When he considered matters by the light of the new morning, he was disposed to face life in a hopeful spirit. "Much is to learn, and much to forget," he murmured to himself, as he rose and dressed; but he felt quite ready to learn, and even to forget also.

(To be continued.)

TWENTY YEARS AGO.

A LOW-BUILT porch, where flowering creepers strayed
 And flickering lights and floating shadows played
 Around her as she stood ; about her dress
 The sunshine lingered in a mute caress ;
 Above her head a white-star jessamine hung,
 And all around her trailing roses flung
 Rich perfumes to the wandering summer air
 That stirred the tresses of her soft brown hair.

And as we nearer drew a little space
 She came to welcome us ; a passing grace
 In face and motion, and her deep-fringed eyes
 As blue and cloudless as the summer skies.

With lingering touches memory loves to stray
 Among the wanderings of that sunny day,
 From out its brightness flinging back a tone
 That thrills me now, though twenty years have flown
 Since last I heard it ; bringing back a smile
 That floats like sunshine through the dim defile
 Of buried years, since by her side I stood,
 And dreamed and wakened in a summer wood.

Friend of my youth ! the dream was not for me !
 Not mine that smile of girlish ecstasy ;
 Not mine that downward look, that sweet, shy tone :
 And so I left you—to awake *alone*.

The day was ended ; in our quiet room,
 White smoke-wreaths circling through the falling gloom,
 We sat in silence, till one trembling star
 In lonely radiance twinkled from afar.
 And then her name fell softly from your lips,
 And o'er my soul there sank a drear eclipse ;
 I saw love's triumph in your dark eyes shine,
 And felt the rush of bitter tears to mine.
 And still I rose and blessed you both, and threw
 My arm around your neck, old friend and true.
 How hope was shattered—all her light had fled,
 And every blossom of my life lay dead—
 You nothing recked ; we clasped strong hands, and parted—
 The one how blessed ! the other broken-hearted !

And so you won her in the summer glow,
 And so my love-dream faded, twenty years ago.

A. S.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

"WELL, GRACE, WHAT AM I TO SAY?" ASKED MR. BAUMGARTEN.

R. TAYLOR.

THE ARGOSY.

MARCH, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER V.

THE LADS.

IT was a long, red brick house, large and handsome, as many of these country Rectories are ; and on the spacious front lawn, one glorious morning at the end of June, might be seen the Reverend Ryle Baumgarten, his wife and children. Lady Grace sat on a bench under the shade of the lime trees ; the Rector stood by, talking with her. Two little boys were running about chasing a yellow butterfly. They were dressed alike, after the fashion of the day, in brown holland blouses, white frilled drawers which came just below the knee, white socks, shoes, and broad-brimmed straw hats.

"You keep still, Charley," cried the elder one, a bold, beautiful child of five years ; "you only frighten him dodging in his way like that."

"Me want to tatch him, Cy'as," said the little one, who was just turned three, and did not speak plainly ; "me a'most dot him."

"I'm going to catch him for you," said the other, imperiously. "You go back to mamma."

"Let him stay where he is ; he can run after the butterfly if he chooses, as well as you, Master Cyras," interposed a nursemaid who was walking about, carrying a baby in white.

"It's nothing to you, Jaquet—you hold your tongue," retorted Cyras, for between him and Jaquet there was no love lost, especially Jaquet, as the Americans say.

A clever movement of his hat captured the unfortunate butterfly. "I've got him, Charley !" shouted Cyras in triumph, and the boys sat down together on the grass.

They were wonderfully alike these two little half-brothers, each possessing his father's face in miniature ; the same pale, healthy complexion, the fine, clear-cut features, the dark eyes so deeply set within their long lashes, and the wavy brown hair soft as silk. But in dispo-

sition they were quite different. Cyras was bold, self-willed, masterful ; Charles gentle, pliant and timid. Cyras was tall and strong, and forward beyond his years ; the younger one was yielding, childish and backward. Already Cyras constituted himself his brother's protector, and Charles in his hands was as a tender reed. The affection between them was great, rather unusually so.

When Lady Grace married, she had brought Jaquet with her, one of the housemaids from Avon House, to be upper housemaid at the Rectory and to wait upon herself. Dinah also came to it in charge of little Cyras. Just as Lady Grace's first child, Charles, was born, old Dinah was seized with permanent illness, and Jaquet became nurse to both children. Jaquet was good and faithful on the whole, but she had her tempers and her prejudices. She learned to love the infant with ardour, but she learned to dislike Cyras. This arose partly from the fact that she had not herself nursed him from the first, and partly because Cyras, even when very little, would set her at defiance in refusing to give in to her whims.

Some people had prophesied that Lady Grace would repent her imprudent marriage. They proved to be wrong. Grace was intensely happy in it. To live quietly at a secluded country Rectory upon fourteen hundred a year was very different from the pomp which she had enjoyed as an earl's daughter, but Grace seemed to have found her vocation in this unpretending life. Grace had brought with her only five hundred a year to augment Mr. Baumgarten's means ; it was all she would enjoy until Lady Avon's death. She made a fairly kind stepmother to the little Cyras, but she had not the same affection for him as for Charles. That goes, as the French say, without telling. Her baby, now in Jaquet's arms, was a fair girl, the little Gertrude.

"Well, Grace, what am I to say?" asked Mr. Baumgarten.

Lady Grace did not answer at once ; she appeared to be considering. It was some question of a visit they were discussing.

"Ryle," she said, raising her beautiful face to look at him, "I would rather not go. I do not like that man."

"So be it," he answered ; "I would rather stay at home myself. But why don't you like him, Grace ? Most people find him charming."

"I can't tell why. I *don't*, and that's all I am able to say about it."

"A case of Dr. Fell," returned the rector with semi-gravity ; and Lady Grace laughed.

"Yes, that's it, I suppose. My private opinion is that his own wife does not like him."

"I say, Grace, don't talk treason. The birds in the trees up there might carry it to the parish crier."

"I'll tell you one thing I saw, Ryle, the last time we were there : I've never mentioned it even to you," she resumed, lowering her voice in deference to the subject or to the birds of the air. "It was the evening before we came away. After I dressed for dinner I went

to her room door and knocked, calling out to ask whether she was ready to go down. She opened it herself very quickly; her face looked confused, and there was a red mark on the left cheek, as if she had just had a blow, and tears were in her eyes. She only drew the door open an inch or two, but I saw ——”

Lady Grace broke off at the sound of wheels and did not finish her story. The large, low, open carriage, which the reader has seen before, driven by its liveried postilion, was stopping at the gate. Mr. Baumgarten hastened to assist Lady Avon from it, and give her his arm.

She walked slowly to the bench where her daughter was sitting. She was just the same invalid as ever, had been so all these years; but she did not seem to grow much worse. The boys ran up to her.

“Me dot a butterfly, grandma,” said the little one, exhibiting his treasure. “Cy’as dot it for me.”

“Grandmamma, it is my birthday,” said Cyras, who had been allowed so to call the Countess. “Papa gave me a new book with pictures, and mamma gave me a box of sweets. Shall you give me anything?”

“I must consider what I have to give,” said Lady Avon smiling, as she kissed them both. “Let me see, is it five years old you are to-day, Cyras?”

“Yes, I’m five,” answered the young man. “I shall be a great big boy next year; big enough to go to school, Jaquet says.”

Jaquet, who had drawn near with the baby, knitted her brows and made all the dumb signs to the boy she dare make, as an injunction to hold his tongue; her lady was not one to permit gratuitous suggestions. The Countess held out her arms for the baby.

“The boys are like their father, Grace,” she observed, looking down at the infant; “but Gertrude is like you.”

“Yes,” assented Grace, with a laugh. “Well, mamma, that is just as it should be, isn’t it?”

“I suppose it is, my dear. Which of you little boys will go for a drive with me? It must be you, Cyras, I think, as it is your birthday.”

“Oh, yes, yes!” cried the boy eagerly; “I will go. Jaquet, fetch my best hat.”

“Me, too,” added little Charley.

“No, I cannot manage both of you,” said Lady Avon. “You shall go another day, Charley; perhaps to-morrow.”

“My hat, Jaquet!” again said Cyras impatiently, for the girl had not stirred. Lady Grace looked at her.

“Do you hear,” she said, in her haughty way. “Master Cyras told you to fetch his hat. Bring his little cape as well.”

Now this was just what Jaquet hated. For Cyras to order her about imperiously, and for her lady to confirm it.

“Ryle,” said Lady Avon to her son-in-law, when Jaquet had gone for the things, “can you not do something or other to put down that Fair?”

She spoke of a pleasure fair which was held every midsummer on Whitton Common, and lasted for a week.

The Rector shook his head in answer. "Why, no ; how could I, Lady Avon ?"

"You have great influence in the parish. Everyone looks up to you."

"But I have none over the Fair. No one has. It possesses 'vested interests,' you know," added Mr. Baumgarten laughing, "and they are too strong to be interfered with. I try to induce my people to keep away from it ; that is all I can do."

"It is a very annoying thing," said Lady Avon. "Every year that Midsummer Fair sets itself up amidst us for a whole week, and works no end of ill in demoralizing people. Robert went off to it last night, and got home, Charity tells me, at one o'clock this morning, not sober. I spoke to him just now, asking him if he did not feel ashamed of himself, and he had the face to tell me he was perfectly sober, but that the merry-go-round, which he unfortunately went into, turned his head giddy."

The Rector bit his lips. Lady Grace burst into a laugh. "Mamma," she said, "do you remember how I used to like to go to that Fair on the children's day, as it is called, when we first came down here? They had a theatre on the ground one year, and I made Mademoiselle take me in to see the performance ; and there was always an elephant in another show, and oceans of delicious cakes and gingerbread nuts."

"I'm going to the Fair to-morrow," put in Cyras.

"Me too," said Charley.

"Certainly not," austere spoke Lady Avon. "Ryle, you surely will not so far countenance the thing as to allow your children to go!"

"Well, I—hardly know," replied Mr. Baumgarten with hesitation. "All the children in the parish will be there to-morrow."

"But not yours. It would be a direct encouragement of evil for the children of the Rector to be seen there. You and Grace know I never interfere with your management, but I really must do so in this one matter. The boys must not go to the Fair."

"Don't put yourself out, mother," said Lady Grace equably ; "they shall not go as you make a point of it."

"I want to go, mamma," cried Cyras sturdily. "Me and Charley are to go."

"Be quiet, Cyras. You hear what grandmamma says. The Fair is a naughty place, not good for little boys."

"The Fair is not a naughty place," disputed Cyras, looking his step-mother undauntedly in the face while maintaining his opinion. "There's swings there, and drums and whistles."

"I will have some drums and whistles bought for you, my dear, and bring them here, and some for Charley," said Lady Avon. "And here comes your hat, Cyras ; and we must be going, or we shall have time for only a short drive."

Jaquet put on the child's hat and cape. Grace took the baby from her mother, and Mr. Baumgarten escorted Lady Avon to the carriage.

"Be a good boy, Cyrus; don't be troublesome to your grandmamma," enjoined the Rector, as he placed the lad beside Lady Avon.

Cyrus could be very good indeed when he pleased, quite an intelligent little companion, and he always was so when with Lady Avon. Without being in the least harsh in her manner to children, but ever kind and firm, Lady Avon was one of those women who seem to obtain obedience without palpably exacting it. The only child she had ever been too indulgent to, and *not* firm with, was her daughter Grace. Cyrus talked to his grandmamma as they went along, sometimes standing up—when Lady Avon held him fast by his blouse—to talk to the postilion about the pretty horses and the harness, and what not. Cyrus was always sociable.

"Where are we going, grandmamma?" asked he, as they turned into a green lane, which led to a cross country road in the opposite direction to the Fair, near which Lady Avon would not have gone had she been bribed to do so. "It is very pretty this way; perhaps we shall see some haymakers."

Cyrus was quite satisfied; all roads were pretty much alike to him. They saw some haymakers, and they saw some gipsies.

In returning home, when driving across a strip of waste land or common, an open carriage containing an old lady encountered that of Lady Avon. Both carriages stopped abreast, and the ladies entered into conversation. It chanced that they had stopped exactly opposite a gipsy encampment, the sight of which gave Cyrus unbounded delight. He had never seen one before; or, if he had, had forgotten it.

The fires on the short grass; the kettles swung above them; the tent behind; the children running about, and the dark, sunburnt women who looked up with smiling faces, had a wonderful attraction for Cyrus. He wished he might get out and run to them; but just as he was wishing it the carriages parted to move on.

"Grandmamma, look. Do look. Isn't it nice?"

Lady Avon turned to Cyrus's side of the carriage and saw the settlement; she had not before observed it. "Dear me," said she, "a gipsy encampment! I wonder they are not at the Fair. The men are, I suppose; I see none about."

"What is it, grandmamma?"

"A gipsy camp, my dear. They are people who rove about the country, and sleep in the open air at night, or in caravans."

"I wish I could. Do you see the fires, grandmamma? Couldn't we go to them?"

"Oh, dear, no," said Lady Avon, very decisively. "Little boys must never go near such people."

The carriage deposited Cyrus at the Rectory gate as the clocks were

striking one. Lady Avon watched him inside, and then drove on. Charley came running out of doors to meet his brother.

"Oh, Charley, I wish you'd been with us!" began Cyrus. "We've seen something beautiful."

"What is it?" asked Charles. "Jam?"

"It was gipsies. They'd got fires all blazing on the ground—on the grass, you know; and there was a big round thing you couldn't see inside of. I think there was a rocking-horse in it," added Cyrus, thoughtfully.

"Take me to see it, Cy'as! Please take me! Jaquet ——"

The child's words were cut short by Jaquet herself, who came to hasten them in to their dinner.

The little boys dined at the luncheon table. That day it happened that a clergyman from a distance was present at the meal. He and Mr. Baumgarten went into very deep converse about some public church matters which were not giving satisfaction. Lady Grace joined in it; thus Cyrus found no opportunity to tell of his experiences touching the gipsy camp, as he would otherwise have done. The children were trained on the good old-fashioned plan—not to interrupt the conversation of their seniors, or to speak at all if strangers were present, unless spoken to. It would be well if the same training held sway at the present day.

Luncheon over, Mr. Baumgarten went out at once with his friend. Lady Grace proceeded to the nursery, and the boys ran to their swing—a perfectly safe one—at the back of the house.

About three o'clock Lady Alwyn and her sister drove up. They came from a distance, and generally stayed an hour or two with Lady Grace, with whom they were intimate, the carriage being put up for the time. The days of afternoon tea had not then come in; people would as soon have thought of offering broth as tea before dinner; but wine and cake, the usual refreshment, were rung for by Lady Grace, which the man-servant, Moore, took in.

About four o'clock, Jaquet went to see after the boys. Her mistress had said they had gone to the swing. Jaquet could not see them anywhere and ran round to the front lawn. They were not there.

"Do you know where the children are, Moore?" she enquired, meeting the man in the hall.

"No, unless they're with my lady in the drawing-room; they were there when I took in the wine and cake," answered Moore. He was a son of the clerk at Great Whitton church, and had lived with Mr. Baumgarten and Lady Grace since they first came to the Rectory, the only indoor manservant.

"Oh, then they are sure to be there: trust them for stopping where there's any cake going on," said Jaquet. And she went back to her nursery and to the baby, then just waking up out of sleep.

It was five o'clock when the carriage was brought round and the

guests went away. Lady Grace ran up to the nursery. A maid was carrying in the tray containing the children's tea and Jaquet's.

"Where are they?" asked Lady Grace, looking round.

"Where's who, my lady?" returned the nurse.

"The children."

"They have not been up here," said Jaquet. "I thought they were with your ladyship."

"They must be at the swing," said Lady Grace.

But the children were not at the swing; they were not in the front garden; they did not seem to be anywhere. Lady Grace began to feel somewhat uneasy. She went outside the gate and looked down the avenue which led to the high road; still she did not think they would run off of their own accord; even Cyras had never done that.

Moore, Jaquet, and one of the housemaids went about, searching the house and grounds thoroughly; all in vain. In the midst of the commotion Mr. Baumgarten came home.

"Why, what's the matter?" he exclaimed, seeing the assembled searchers at the gate with excited faces.

"The children are lost," said Lady Grace.

"Lost! The children! Oh, nonsense," said Mr. Baumgarten.

It appeared that the last seen of them was when Moore took the wine and cake to the drawing-room. Lady Grace was not very clear as to how soon afterwards they left it; she thought immediately; but she was quite sure they came into it only a minute or two before Moore. They did not have any cake; did not wait until it was cut.

"What time was it?" asked Mr. Baumgarten.

It wanted about a quarter to four, Moore thought, when he took the tray in.

At this moment, a youth, who had been taken on that week to assist the gardener in bedding out some plants, approached from the side of the lawn, touching his cap to the Rector, and looking as if he wanted to speak.

"What is it, James?"

"I beg pardon, sir; I saw the two little gentlemen go through the gate this afternoon. It was a little afore four o'clock. They ran as fast as they could down the avenue, their little legs did, as if afraid of being overtook. Master Cyras held the little one by the hand."

"Why did you not stop them?" demanded the Rector—which caused James to open wide his eyes.

"Me, sir! I shouldn't made bold to stop 'em, sir, without being telled to."

"They have gone off to the Fair," said Mr. Baumgarten to his wife. "I suppose this comes of our having promised your mother in their hearing that they should not go to it."

"Then it's Cyras who is in fault," said she. "Charles would not have the sense to do such a thing, or the courage either."

"Of course not. He is too young for that yet awhile."

"Will they come to harm, think you, Ryle?"

"Young monkeys!" he cried, half laughing, as he walked away with a quick step in pursuit. "Harm, no; don't worry yourself, Grace; I'll soon catch them up."

The Fair was held on Whitton Common, on the other side of the village, and near to Little Whitton. There was also a way to it through fields and shady lanes, and Lady Grace bethought herself to despatch Moore by that route, though it was hardly likely the children had taken it.

In any kind of suspense time seems to move on leaden wings. When an hour had elapsed and did not bring the truants, Lady Grace grew very uneasy. In her restlessness, she put on her bonnet and went down the avenue to where the high road crossed it, and stood there looking out. All the stragglers, passing by, were going towards the Fair; none coming from it. Not one.

"Of course not!" she impatiently cried. "It is just the time when the workpeople are flocking to it," and she turned back home. This little excursion she repeated twice or thrice.

About half-past six, standing again in the road, she saw Mr. Baumgarten hastening back. But he was not leading a child in each hand, as she had fondly pictured; he was alone.

"I cannot see or hear anything of them," he said, in answer to his wife's impulsive question. "I don't think they can have gone to the Fair."

"But where else would they be likely to go, Ryle?"

"Boyd has been sitting in his garden all the afternoon, in full aim of the road; had his tea brought out to him there," continued Mr. Baumgarten, alluding to his curate, who had been disabled the past week or two, through an accident to his foot. "He says he could not have failed to see the little ones had they appeared; and he has been watching the passers-by to the Fair by way of amusement."

"Did you go on to the Fair, Ryle, and look about in it? Did you enquire of the people?"

"Why, of course I did, Grace. I searched all over it, in the booths and out of them. Only a sprinkling of people had collected; it was too early. I inquired of nearly everyone, I think, describing the boys; but they had not been seen."

Just within the avenue leading to the house there stood a bench, placed there by Mr. Chester, the late Rector, for the accommodation of wayfarers. Mr. Baumgarten, who was hot and tired, sat down on it.

"You had better come in and have some dinner, Ryle."

"Not now; I must be off again."

"But where can you go now?" she asked, taking a seat beside him.

"I don't know where; somewhere or other. I can't rest in this uncertainty."

"Did you see Moore? I sent him after you, the field way."

"I saw him on the common. He had not come across the young ones."

Two or three minutes longer they sat. Mr. Baumgarten was utterly fatigued and quite at a loss to decide which way would be the best, next to start upon. Grace shivered inwardly, picturing the harm which would come, or had come, to Charley.

"Do you think they have been kidnapped, Ryle? Both are beautiful boys."

"No, no," said Mr. Baumgarten.

By degrees they became aware that sundry people were speeding along the highway one after another, not towards the Fair, but in the other direction. "Where can they be going?" cried Grace.—"Has anything happened?" she inquired, running to arrest one of them—a working man from a cottage hard by.

"It's reported there has just been a great landslip in that cutting they were making for the railway, my lady, and some people are buried under it," answered the man. "One boy's killed."

Lady Grace cried out in terror. "Oh Ryle, Ryle, do you hear?" she moaned. "*That's* where the children are gone. The other day, when I had them out with me, I could hardly get them past it. They wanted to go down into the cutting."

Mr. Baumgarten turned very pale. "Hush, my dear!" he said in a low, tender tone, "we must hope for the best. I will—here comes Brice!"

"Yes, I'm afraid it is a serious accident," began the doctor, in answer to their emotional faces. A fellow has just run over to tell me. *What* do you say?—*What*?—The children there! Bless my heart!"

"Go indoors, my love; keep yourself as tranquil as you can while I go on with Brice," whispered Mr. Baumgarten to his agitated wife.

Indoors! In that suspense? No; Lady Grace could not be tranquil enough for that. She paced about the avenue, and sat down on the bench, and stood in the highway watching the runners speeding to the scene; all by fits and starts. Twilight was coming on when she saw her husband returning. Mr. Brice was with him.

The landslip had not been so bad as reported. Landslips and other mishaps rarely are. Two men only were injured, and the boy spoken of; none of them mortally, and Mr. Brice had attended to them. No trace had been found there of the children.

"I'm sure I don't know where to look now," said Mr. Baumgarten, his voice betraying his weariness. "Grace, I believe I must snatch some refreshment before I go out again."

She put her arm within his at once and led him down the avenue. "Are you coming, too, Mr. Brice?" she said, holding out her hand. "That's right. I'm sure you must need something."

Tea was brought in, and some hastily-cut sandwiches. In ten minutes they were out of doors again.

"They are at the Fair, those young rebels, rely upon that," spoke Mr. Brice, purposely making light of the matter. "You must have missed them, Baumgarten."

"I think so, too," added Lady Grace. "I think you should go there again, Ryle."

Just as she was speaking, and they were walking slowly down the path, the gate opened and a group came in. A tall man, with flashing black eyes and a yellow skin, evidently a gipsy, and—the two boys. He was carrying Charley in his arms; Cyrus trotted beside him.

"Mamma, mamma!" cried Charley. And Grace Baumgarten wondered whether she had ever before given such heartfelt thanks to God.

Instead of advancing to meet the children and the man, Mr. Baumgarten suddenly sat down on a garden seat. The same curious sickness, or pain, or oppression—he hardly knew what it was—which had attacked him once or twice before, seized him now. Mr. Brice and Lady Grace were asking questions.

"Yes, master," said the man, addressing Mr. Brice, "when we got back to the women and children this evening these two little gents was there with 'em round the fire; so I set off again and brought 'em home."

"How could you be so naughty, Cyrus, as to run away?" cried Lady Grace.

"I wanted to show Charley the gipsy camp," replied Cyrus.

"Were you not afraid, Charley, to go all that way," she continued.

"Me not afraid with Cy'as," said the little one.

"I took care of Charley," put in Cyrus, as if he had been a giant of strength.

Looking white and ill, Mr. Baumgarten came forward. The paroxysm had passed. He spoke a few heartfelt thanks to the man and rewarded him, and took him indoors that something to eat and drink might be given to him.

"I shall never speak against gipsies again," impulsively declared Lady Grace Baumgarten.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE CATHEDRAL.

THE shades of twilight were fast gathering on the aisles of the old Cathedral, and the congregation, assembled in the choir for afternoon service, began to wonder whether the chanter would be able to finish without a light. The beautiful colours of the painted east window were growing dim—exceedingly beautiful were they when the sun illumined them.

It was a full congregation, unusually numerous for a winter's afternoon, and one that threatened rain. The Bishop of Denham occupied his throne ; the Dean, a younger man and very handsome, sat in his stall. By his side was a boy of ten, or rather more ; he possessed the Dean's own face in miniature, and there could be no mistaking that they were father and son. Underneath the Dean was the pew of his wife, and with her was another boy, somewhat younger, but bearing a great resemblance to the one by the Dean. She was a fair, beautiful woman, with stately manners and a haughty face ; in age she may have been a year above thirty, though she did not look it.

Lord Avon, through influential friends, had taken care of his brother-in-law's preferment, and Ryle Baumgarten had been made Dean of Denham, and had taken his doctor's degree. He still retained the living of Great Whitton, as he was able to do, and he and Lady Grace spent part of the year at it. This afternoon he is presiding in his cathedral, and his wife, as already observed, sits beneath him. Cyrus sits with the Dean, Charles with his mother. Now they are all rising for the anthem.

The anthem was a short one this afternoon ; it was soon over, and the congregation knelt again. Meanwhile the atmosphere had grown darker.

The chanter, an elderly man with a round face and bald head, bent his spectacles nearer and nearer to his book, and the Dean, quietly pushing back the curtain beside his own stall, leaned down, whispered a word to one of the bedesmen who were congregated on the steps inside the choir entrance. The old man shuffled out, and presently shuffled in again with a flaring tallow candle, which he carried to the chanter's desk. The chanter gave him a nod for the unexpected accommodation, and went on more glibly. He had seen a light taken to the organ-loft before the commencement of the anthem.

The service concluded, the Bishop gave the blessing, and the congregation left the choir, but they did not leave the edifice : they waited in the body of the Cathedral to listen to the music, for the organist was treating them to some of the choicest morceaux amongst his voluntaries. He was an eminent player, and now and then chose to show them that he was so, and would keep them, delighted listeners, full half an hour after the conclusion of afternoon service : and sometimes he had to do so by order of the Dean.

The Bishop had little ear for music, but liked stopping in the Cathedral, and the social chat it afforded, very well. He slowly paced the flag-stones by the side of the dean's wife, the respectful crowd allowing them a wide berth ; Dr. Baumgarten stood close to the railings of a fine monument, partly listening, partly talking to the Sub-Dean. It was the month of November, the audit season, therefore all the great dignitaries of the Cathedral were gathered in Denham.

"What's that now, Lady Grace?" asked the Bishop. "It's something like Luther's Hymn: variations on it, possibly."

Lady Grace Baumgarten coughed down a laugh: but she knew the Bishop's musical deficiencies. "It is from a symphony of Mozart's: your lordship does not listen."

"Mozart, eh. I can distinguish a tune well enough when they sing the words to it, and I know our familiar airs, 'God save the Queen,' and the 'Blue Bells of Scotland,' and such like, but when it comes to these grand intricate pieces, I am all at sea," spoke the Bishop, in his honest simple-mindedness. "How are the children, Lady Grace?"

"Quite well, thank you. The two boys are here. I don't see them just now, but they are somewhere about."

Lady Grace could not see them, and for a very good reason—that they were not there. The elder, an indulged boy and wilful, had scampered out to the cloisters, the moment he could steal away from the paternal surplice, drawing his brother with him.

"Charley," quoth he, "it's come on to pour cats and dogs, and I promised Dynevor to go out with him after college. You go in, and bring me my top coat."

"Oh, Cyras, don't send me! Let me stop and listen to the organ."

"You stupid little monkey! Come, be off; or else you know what you'll get."

"But the music will be over, Cy," pleaded Charles, who was little and yielding and timid still, and completely under the dominion of masterful Cyras.

"The music be bothered! Here, take my Prayer-book in with you. Such nonsense as it is of mamma, to make us bring our Prayer-books to college when there are the large books in the stalls, ready for use! Look you, Mr. Charles, I'll allow you three minutes to get back here with the coat, and if you exceed it by half a second, you'll catch a tanning."

Master Baumgarten took out his watch—an appendage of which he was excessively proud—as he spoke; and Charley, knowing there was no appeal against his imperious brother, laid hold of the Prayer-book, and flew off through the covered passages which led into the Deanery from the cloisters.

Cyras amused himself with hissing and spitting at an unhappy cat, which had by some mischance got into the enclosed cloister graveyard; and, just before the time was up, back came the child, all breathless, the coat over his arm.

Cyras snatched it from him, thrust an arm into one of its sleeves, and was attempting to thrust the other, when he discovered that it did not belong to him. Charley had by mistake brought his own, and Cyras could not, by any dint of pushing, get into it. His temper rose; he struck the child a smart tap on the cheek, and then began

to buffet him with the unlucky coat. But he took care not to hurt him. It was all show.

"You careless little beggar! What the bother did you bring yours for? Haven't you got eyes? Haven't you got sense? Now, if——"

"Halloa! what's up? What's he been at now, Cy?"

The speaker was Frank Dynevor, Cyras Baumgarten's especial chum when he was at Denham. He was considerably older than Cyras, but the latter was a forward boy of his years, and would not acknowledge a companion in one of his own age.

"I sent him in for my coat, and he must bring his," explained Cyras. "A tanning would do him good."

"Of course it would," said Frank Dynevor. "What's he crying for?"

"For his sins," said Cyras.

The tears stood in Charles's eyes: nothing grieved him so much as for Cyras to be angry with him.

"He cries for nothing," went on Cyras, "and then they get him into the nursery and give him sugar-candy. Mamma and old Jaquet make a regular molly of him. Now, Master Charles, perhaps you'll go and get the right coat. It's his fault that I keep you waiting, Dynevor."

"I am not going," said Dynevor. "They began a row at home about my running out in the rain, so it's stopped, and I came to tell you. Here, Cy, come down this way."

The two boys, Dynevor's arm carelessly cast on the shoulder of Cyras, strolled off together along the cloisters towards the obscure exit which led to the Dark Alley, Cyras having tossed the coat on to Charley's head, nearly throwing him off his legs. Charley disencumbered himself, and espying some of the college boys, with whom he kept up a passing acquaintance when at Denham, he joined them. They were emerging noisily from the schoolroom, after taking off their surplices: music had no charms for them, so they had not remained amidst the listeners in the Cathedral.

Now, there was a charity school in Denham for the sons of small parents, where plain learning was taught: the three "R's," with a smattering of history and other matters. It was a large school, its numbers averaging four or five times those of the foundation school in the Cathedral; and from time immemorial the gentlemen on the college foundation, called the King's Scholars, and the boys of the charity school had been at daggers drawn. The slight pastimes of hard abuse and stone throwing were indulged in, whenever the opposition parties came into contact and circumstances permitted, but there occurred sometimes a more serious interlude—that of a general battle. Animosity at the present time ran unusually high, and, in consequence of some offence offered by the haughty college boys in the past week, the opposition boys (favoured possibly by the unusual darkness of the afternoon) had ventured on the unheard-of exploit of

collecting in a body round the cloister gate to waylay the King's Scholars on their leaving the Cathedral at the close of afternoon service. The latter walked into the trap and were caught ; but they did not want for "pluck," and began laying about them right and left.

The noise penetrated to the other end of the cloisters, to the ears of the two lads parading there, and away they tore, eager to take part in any mischief that might have turned up. The first thing Cyrus saw was his brother Charles struggling in the hands of some half-dozen of the enemy, and being roughly handled. Of course, having been with the college boys, he was taken for one of them ; and being a meek little fellow, who stood aghast in the *mêlée*, instead of helping on the assault—besides looking remarkably aristocratic, a great crime in their eyes—he was singled out as being a particularly eligible target.

All the hot blood of Cyrus Baumgarten's body rushed to his face and his temper : if *he* chose to put upon Charley and "tan" him, he was not going to see others do it. He flung off his jacket and his cap, threw them to Dynevor, and with his sturdy young fists doubled, sprang upon the assailants. What a contrast, when you come to think of it ! The stately, impassive Dean, master of his Cathedral, and standing in it at the present moment, the cynosure of neighbouring eyes ; the elegant Lady Grace with her rank and beauty, both of them particularly alive to the *convenances* of civilised life ; and the two young Baumgartens just beyond earshot, taking part in a juvenile fight, as fierce as any Irish row. Ah, good doctors of divinity, fair Lady Graces, *your* sons may be just as disreputably engaged behind your backs, little as you may suspect it, unworthy of belief as you would deem it.

What would have been the upshot, it is impossible to say—broken noses certainly, if not broken legs—had not the master of the opposition boys come up : a worthy gentleman and martinet, whom the whole lot dreaded more than anything alive. He had scented, or been told of, the expedition, and he had hastened to follow it, and bring down upon those fractious heads the weight of his wrathful authority. The very moment his portly figure was caught sight of, off flew the crew in ignominious alarm, the college boys raising a derisive shout after them, and then decamping to their own homes. A good thing for them, and that it was over and done with, before their masters came out of the cathedral.

Dynevor, who was hand-in-glove with some of the senior boys, returned Cyrus's jacket and cap to him, and went away with his friends ; and the two Baumgartens were left alone. Charles was crying and shaking, Charles's nose was bleeding, and down sat Cyrus in a corner of the now deserted cloisters, and held the child to him, as tenderly as any mother could have done.

"Don't cry, Charley dear," quoth he, kissing him fondly. "I know that biggest fellow that set upon you, and I'll pay him off as sure as

he's a snob. I'd have paid them off now if they had waited, the cowards, and I don't care if they had killed me for it. Where did they hit you, Charley?"

"They hit me everywhere, Cyrus," sobbed the child, who, though barely two years younger than his brother, was as a baby compared with him in hardihood and in knowledge of the world—if the remark may be applied to a young gentleman rising eleven. "Oh, how my nose bleeds!"

Cyrus with his own white handkerchief kept wiping the suffering nose, kissing Charley between whiles.

"Charley, dear," he began, between the latter's sobs, "if I hit you sometimes it isn't that I want to hurt you, for I love you very much, better than anything in the world. You musn't mind my hitting you; I'm used to hit; and it'll teach you to be a man."

"Yes," breathed Charley, clinging closer to Cyrus, whom, in spite of the latter's imperiousness, he dearly loved. "I know you don't do it to hurt me."

"No, that I don't. I don't hurt you ever—do I, Charley?"

"No, never," sobbed Charley. "It's only that I'm afraid you are angry with me."

"But I'm not," disclaimed Cyrus. "There's not a soul in the house cares for you as I do, and I'll stand by you always, through thick and thin."

"Mamma cares for me, Cyrus."

"After her fashion," returned Mr. Cyrus. "She makes a girl of you, and pets you up to the skies. But I'll fight for you, Charley; I'll never let a hair of your head be touched when we go together to Eton or Rugby, whichever it's to be."

"I hope I shall get brave like you, Cy. I think I shall, when I am as big as you: nurse says you were not much better than me when you were as little."

"Oh, I'm blest, though!" returned Cyrus, not pleased with the remark. "*Who* says it?"

"Jaquet."

"Jaquet had better say that to me. She's a nice one! I never was a molly, Charley; I never had the chance to be; she knows that, and she must have said it just to humour you. Why now, only see what a girl they make of you: they keep you in these dandy velvet dresses with a white frill. A white frill! and they don't let you stir out beyond the door, unless there's a woman at your tail to see you don't fall, or don't get lost, or some such nonsense!"

Poor unhappy, timid Charley caught up his sobbing breath.

"And then, look at mamma—taking you into her pew on Sunday! Never was such a spectacle seen before in Denham Cathedral, as for a chap of your age to sit in the ladies' seats. I'd rather be one of those snobs, than I'd be made a molly of."

"Don't call me a molly, Cy," urged the child.

"It's not your fault," returned Cyras, kissing him still, "it's theirs. You have got a brave heart, Charley, for you won't tell a lie, and you'll be brave yourself, when they'll let you. I'll make you so. I'll teach you, and I'll love you better than all of them put together. Does your nose pain you now, Charley, dear?"

"Not much. I was frightened."

A little while longer they sat there. Cyras soothing the still sobbing child, stroking his hair, wiping his eyes, whispering endearing names: and then they got up, and he led him affectionately into the Deanery, through the covered passage.

A couple of pretty objects they looked when they entered the well-lighted residence. Both their faces smeared with blood, with Charley's velvet dress and his "white frill," and Cyras's shirt front: for the latter, in his caresses, had not escaped catching the stains. The Dean and Lady Grace had not entered, for all this had taken place in a very short space of time, and the organist was still playing. Cyras smuggled Charles into the nursery.

"Oh, my patience!" uttered the nurse, who was sitting there with her charge, a lovely little lady between five and six years old, Gertrude Baumgarten, who had been kept at home from college that afternoon with an incipient cold. "You wicked boys! what have you been up to? This is your work, I know, Master Cyras!"

"Is it!—who gave you leave to know?" retorted Cyras. He was no more friendly to Jaquet than he used to be, or she to him.

Gertrude backed in fear against the wall, her eyes, haughty and blue as were her mother's, wide open with astonishment. She did not like the appearance of things, and began to cry.

"Now don't be such a little stupid, Gerty," exclaimed Cyras; "there's nothing to cry for. Charley's nose bled, and it got on to our clothes."

"Yes, it's me that's hurt, Jaquet," put in Charley, remembering his grievances and giving way again. "It isn't Cyras."

"Of course it's not," indignantly returned Jaquet, "what harm does he ever come to? You have been striking him, that's what you have been doing, Master Cyras. You've been thumping him on the nose to make it bleed."

"It's nothing to you if I have," retorted Cyras, in choler. "You just say it again, though, and I'll strike you." He disdained to say it was not so, or to defend himself; he was of by far too indifferent a temperament.

"Oh, nurse—look! look!" screamed out the little girl.

It was supplemented by a sharp scream from Charley; his nose had begun to bleed again; and at that moment there was another interruption. The room door opened, and the Dean and his wife entered: the former still wearing his surplice and hood, and carrying his trencher, for they had been hurriedly disturbed by the noise as came in from the Cathedral.

The nurse, whose temper was not a remarkably calm one and who disliked the daring Cyras, was busy getting hot water and a basin.

"Look at him, my lady, look at him," cried she; "and it's Master Cyras's doings."

"What does all this mean?" demanded the Dean, his eyes wandering from one boy to the other, from their faces to their clothes, his ears taking in the sobbing and the crying. "What is it, I ask?" he sternly continued, for no one had replied.

The Dean might ask, again and again, but he was none the nearer getting an answer. Charley, his head over the basin, was crying, and in too much fear and excitement to hear the question. The sight of only a cut finger had always terrified him. Cyras had one of his independent, obstinate fits coming on, and would not open his lips in explanation or self-defence.

"Cyras thumped Charley's nose to make it bleed, papa," said the little girl, unconsciously improving upon Jaquet's assertion.

"How dared you hit him?" exclaimed Lady Grace, turning to Cyras.

The boy looked at her but did not answer. She took it for bravado. Her passion rose. "You are growing a perfect little savage!" And raising her delicately-gloved hand in the heat of the moment, she struck Master Cyras some tingling blows upon his cheeks. Dr. Baumgarten, deeming possibly that to stand witness of the scene did not contribute to the dignity of the Dean of Denham, just escaped from service in his Cathedral, turned away, calling upon Cyras to follow him.

It was not Cyras, however, who followed the Dean, it was Lady Grace. He had gone to his own study, had laid down his cap, and was taking off his sacred vestments himself, dispensing with the customary aid of his servant. His wife closed the door.

"Ryle, how is this to end?" she asked.

"What do you mean, Grace?"

"I mean about Cyras; but you know very well without my telling you. The boy has been indulged until he is getting the mastery of us all. He positively struck Gertrude the other day."

"As Jaquet chose to interpret it," said the Dean. "I enquired into that. Cyras gave the child a tap on the arm. Of course he ought not to have done even that, and I punished him for it."

"You cannot see his failings, Ryle; you supply him with an unlimited command of money ——"

"Unlimited!" again interrupted the Dean. "You speak without thought, Grace."

"I think too much," she replied. "I have abstained hitherto from serious remonstrance, for if ever I have interfered by a word, you have attributed it, I feel sure, to a jealous feeling, because he is not my own child. But I now tell you that something must be done:

if that boy is to stop in the house and rule it, I won't. I will not allow him to ill-treat Charles : I will not, I say."

"Hush, Grace, you are excited. Remember the day."

"I do not forget it. Your son did, probably, when he struck Charles."

"I cannot think he struck him—in that fierce manner."

"Why, you saw the proofs," she retorted. "Don't you mean to enquire into it—and punish him?"

"I certainly do—if you will only allow me time, Grace. Much has not been lost yet."

"If you have any feeling for your other children, you will take measures by which this annoyance may be put a stop to : it is to me most irritating."

Lady Grace left the room, and the Dean rang the bell, despatching the servant who answered it for Master Baumgarten. Cyrus had not yet gone the length of disobeying his father's mandates, and attended as soon as he had been, what the nurse called, "put to rights," meaning his unsightly shirt changed for a clean one. Charley, his nose shiny and swollen, but himself otherwise in order, stole in after him.

"Now, Cyrus," began the Dean, "we must have an explanation, and if you deserve punishment you shall not escape it. I did not think my boy was a coward, still less that he would ill-treat his younger brother."

The colour flashed into the cheeks of Cyrus, and a light into his eyes. But he would not speak.

"Come hither, Charles. Do you see his face, sir?" added the Dean, taking the child's hand. "Are you not ashamed to look at it, and to reflect that you have caused him all this grief and pain ——"

"Papa," interrupted Charles, "it was not Cyrus who hurt me. It was the snobs."

"It—was—the—what?" slowly uttered the Dean, his dignity taken a little aback.

"Those charity boys. Frank Dynevor calls them snobs, so does Cyrus. I was with the college boys in the cloisters, and they set upon us ; there were five or six upon me all at once, papa ; they hit me on the nose, and I daresay they would have killed me, only Cyrus came running up and fought with them, because I was not strong enough, and got me away. And then he sat down in the cloisters and nursed me as long as I was frightened, and that's how the blood got upon his clothes."

"The Dean looked from one to the other. "Was it not Cyrus who hurt you, then? I scarcely understand."

"Cyrus loves me too much to hurt me," cried Charley, lifting his beautiful, deeply-set brown eyes, just like Cyrus's, just like the Dean's, to his father's face. "He was kissing me all the time in the cloisters ; he was so sorry I was hurt ; and he says he loves me better than

anybody else in the world, and he'll pay off that biggest snob the first time he sees him. Don't you, Cyras?"

The boy turned caressingly to Cyras. Cyras looked red and foolish, not caring to have his private affections betrayed for the public benefit, and he shook off Charley. Dr. Baumgarten drew Cyras to him, and fondly pushed his hair from his forehead.

"Tell me about it, my boy."

"Charley was just talking to some of the college boys, papa, and those horrid charity snobs ——"

"Stop a bit. What do you mean by 'snobs?' Very vulgar word, Cyras, and a wrong one for you to use. Of whom do you speak?"

"Oh, you know that big parish school, papa: well, they are always setting on the college boys, and they came up to the cloisters this evening, and Charley, being with the boys, got in for his share of pummelling, and I beat the fellows off him. That's all."

"Why did you not say this to your mamma in the nursery? You made her angry with you for nothing."

Cyras shook back his head with a somewhat defiant movement.

"Mamma's often angry with me for nothing, as far as that goes. I don't care. As to Jaquet," he added, drowning a warning gesture of the Dean's, "she's always telling stories of me."

"Now what do you mean by saying 'I don't care,' Cyras? It is very wrong to be indifferent, even in speech."

"I mean nothing, papa," laughed the boy. "Only I can fight my own battles against Jaquet, and I will. She has no business to interfere with me when she hates me so much; let her concern herself with Charles and Gertrude."

The Dean left the boys together, and went in search of his wife. He found her in her chamber. She had taken off her outdoor things, and was now in her dinner dress. The attendant quitted the room as he entered it.

"Grace," said he, going up to her, "there has been a misapprehension, and I have come to set you right. Charley got into an affray with some strange boys in the cloisters (the details of which I shall make it my business to inquire into), and Cyras defended him against them—going into them no doubt like a young lion, for he possesses uncommon spirit; too much of it. We have been casting blame on Cyras, unnecessarily."

Lady Grace lifted her eyes to her husband. She knew him to be an honourable man (putting out of the question his divinity and his deanship), and that he would not assert a thing except in perfect good faith.

"Do you mean that Cyras did not beat Charles?"

"He did not. He protected him."

"Why did not Cyras say so, then?"

"His spirit in fault again, I suppose; too proud to defend himself against an unjust imputation," replied the Dean. But the Dean was

wrong, unhappily : Cyras was too carelessly indifferent to defend himself. The Dean continued : " I ordered Cyras before me, and began taking him to task. Charles, who had come in with him, spoke up eagerly, saying Cyras had fought *for* him, to defend him from his assailants, not *against* him. You should have heard the child, Grace, telling how Cyras sat down and nursed him afterwards in the cloisters, kissing him and wiping the blood from his face, and whispering him how he loved him better than anything else in the world. Grace, those two will be affectionate, loving brothers if we do not mar it."

Lady Grace felt that she had been unjust in striking Cyras, as well as guilty of an unladylike action, and perhaps she felt more contrition at the moment than the case really warranted.

" How mar it ? " she faltered.

The Dean put his arm round his wife's waist before replying. " Grace, you best know what is in your heart : whether or not there is a dislike towards Cyras rankling there. I think there is, and that it makes you unjust to him. If you are not very cautious it may sow dissension between the children."

Grace Baumgarten burst into tears, and laid her face caressingly upon her husband's breast : she loved him almost as passionately as she had ever done. " Ryle," she whispered, " if there be any such feeling, it is born of my love for you."

He smiled to himself. " I know it, my dearest ; I know that you remember he is not your child ; yet that does not make the feeling less inexcusable."

" Oh, but you are mistaken in using such a word," she spoke up, rallying herself. " Dislike ! Ryle, I do not dislike Cyras. I cannot love him as I do Charles—how can I ? and he is very troublesome and vexes me. Some boys are ten times more wearying than others ; they must try the patience of even their own mothers."

Cyras *was* troublesome ; one of those boys who are never still—always in some mischief or other. The Dean allowed that.

" Grace, listen. I think the boy is *made* worse than he would be ; he has hardly fair play between you and Jaquet."

" I never allow Jaquet to be unjust to him."

" Is she ever anything but unjust to him ? " returned the Dean. " Does she not bring to you tales of him continually ? making mole-hills into mountains, purposely to set you against him ? My dear, I fancy it is so."

" If I thought she did, I would discharge her to-day," spoke Lady Grace, in haughty impulse.

" Not to-day ; it is Sunday," laughed the Dean.

" I will watch," said Lady Grace. " But, Ryle, you know you do indulge Cyras too much ; you have ever done so. You may not be conscious of it. When a parent inordinately indulges a child, I do not believe he ever is conscious of it. And there are boys and boys, you know. We may indulge Charles as much as we please ; it

would never hurt him ; but it is bad for a self-willed boy like Cyras."

Lady Grace was right. But no more was said, for the steps of the boys were heard on the stairs, and she opened the door.

"Come in, Cyras ; I want you," she said, drawing him gently to her. "Your papa has been telling me that it was not you who hit Charles and made his nose bleed."

"Of course it was not me—as if I would !" said Cyras.

"But why did you not tell me so ?"

"It didn't matter," said the boy.

"It did matter. It caused me to punish you, for I thought you deserved it. I am sorry to have done so, Cyras, but the fault was yours. You should have told me the truth."

"Sometimes when you are angry with me, mamma, and I tell you the truth, you don't believe me. You believe Jaquet instead of me. I don't get fair play in this house with anybody, except papa."

The Dean glanced at his wife. This was bearing out his own hints to her.

"Jaquet hates me, mamma ; you know she always did hate me."

"I hope not, Cyras. And I do not think she would dare to say to me what was not true."

"Oh wouldn't she !" cried the bold boy. "She does it to get me into a row with you and make you punish me. Didn't she tell you it was me that made Charley's nose bleed just now, and didn't you believe her and hit me for it ? It wasn't me ; and nobody had told her it was me ; but she took and said it."

Lady Grace, struck with the argument, if not with its eloquence, paused in thought.

"It's her spite," said Cyras. "Charley and Gerty might see it is, only they are little duffers, and can't believe anything bad of Jaquet. She pets them both up, and gives them sugarsticks."

"Well, we will go to tea now, and you shall take it in my room this evening, and I'll pour it out for you," said Lady Grace, briskly, kissing both the lads.

"I have made my mind up, Ryle," said Lady Grace to her husband later. "Jaquet goes."

And, to Jaquet's infinite astonishment, she had her warning the next day. After a few moments given to getting over her discomfiture, she told her lady that at the end of the month she had been intending to give warning on her own side, for she was going to "alter her condition."

Which meant that she was about to get married. But when the name of the intended bridegroom was disclosed, it provoked some laughter from the Dean's household, especially from his eldest son. For the name was—

"Bones."

(To be continued.)

SOME LEAVES FROM A LIFE.

THE old town in which my girlhood was passed, and where I am now writing these slight reminiscences of former days, stands on the verge of what was once a considerable forest, of which only a few scattered vestiges now remain.

It is built with picturesque irregularity, all round and all over a lofty hill ; giving to some of the inhabitants the doubtful privilege of being able to inspect at leisure the interior of a neighbour's chimney. At the foot of this hill flows a broad placid river, spanned by many a bridge, and winding its quiet course past meadow and cornfield, past castle and spire, till it melts away and is lost in the blue distance.

Our town—we will call it Oldminster—is a favourite resort both of the artist and the antiquary ; the former finds countless subjects for his portfolio, and the latter can trace here with unusual distinctness, the stamp left by the various successive possessors of the soil. Roman, Saxon, Dane, Norman, each has left his footprint : like unto the brown ridges on the sea-shore by which we may count the steps of the ebbing tide.

Our house was a large, irregular building, having been altered and added to by many generations ; part of it was of considerable antiquity, and was believed to have been one of the last places in England where the Knights of St. John had retained an establishment. Hence its name : the Priory. There was a splendid stained glass window in this part of the house, and also some carved pillars and arches of a decidedly ecclesiastical type ; and I used often to fancy, as I sat in the broad, deep window seat, poring over “Ivanhoe” or the “Talisman” and watching the glorious flood of purple and crimson light falling over the wide staircase into the stone hall below, how the same radiance might have flashed on the armour or tinted the mantles of those old soldiers of the cross.

The principal entrance to the Priory was through stately iron gates ; but there existed another entrance that some of us liked better.

From a dusty, narrow lane, you opened a small door in the encircling wall, and you were in Paradise. Cool green lawns spread around you on every side. In spring, violets and primroses clustered at the roots of the old elm trees, pink and white blossoms scented the air, and the laburnum waved its golden sprays. In summer, the roses, pink, white, crimson, made it like the garden of an Eastern king. The primroses are there still, and June still brings its roses : but all else is changed !

I, Margaret West, was an only child, and naturally the pet and idol of my father and mother. But I was by no means lonely, for

we had hosts of relatives ; some living in grand old houses in the town, some in pretty places in the surrounding country ; and their young people, boys and girls, were often at the Priory, my dear friends and companions. As I look back to it, it seems as if our happy lives, as we grew up together, had been as one long, bright summer's day.

My father, Francis West, was the eldest. His brother, William, was the head of the principal bank in the town : a bank of no mean note, and which had its representatives in more than one foreign land. Uncle William's eldest son, Philip, entered the bank when he was of a suitable age, and I became engaged to him. Philip and I had been play-fellows in childhood, friends in our school days, and now a deeper and a stronger love had sprung up between us, and we were to be together for life.

The course of our "true love" ran smoothly. Friends on both sides gave smiling approval. There were no rivals, no misunderstandings, as in the old song :

"Some jealousy of someone's heir,
Some hopes of dying broken-hearted."

Only we were to wait until we were both older and wiser (so they said) and Philip richer, before we embarked together on our life's journey. I asked no better ; I was the happiest of the happy.

We hear discussions as to which kind of love is the most perfect : that which, beginning in early companionship and affection, and growing gradually with the progress of time, develops at last into the fullness and crown of all ; or that, which like "some glorious stranger," comes from afar, bursts suddenly into being, and transforms the whole of life in an hour ? The former has been compared to the result of the artist's slow and patient work ; the latter to the "sun picture," stamped in a moment. Unfortunately this question can never be decided, since no individual experience could contain both. Our love, Philip's and mine, was of the former kind, and we thought it the best.

Oh, happy days of youth, gone by for ever ! Is it true that "Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things ?" I think not. I would not lose the memory of those days for anything that could now be offered me. The wild autumn wind wails round the old house, as I write, with its mournful music, and scatters the withered leaves across the lawn—the leaves, once so green, the violets of spring and the roses of summer are gone. Just so are the spring and summer of my life over, and only autumn leaves remain to tell of their departed glory. But to my garden will come once more the brightness of another spring and the glory of another summer : and I, also, look forward to "the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

II.

ONE evening in the late spring, I sat in the garden waiting as usual for Philip's visit. Over my head was a cloud of pink and white blossoms ; primroses starred the grass at my feet. The birds were still singing in the old trees, as if unwilling to lose the last hour of such a day, and the little stream, that ran through the wood at the side of our house, went by with a pleasant sound. From the town came the mellowed murmur of many tones, all softened into music by distance, and rising gently on the still evening air. There was not a cloud in the sky, nor in my happy heart.

The green door opened, and I heard Philip's quick, light step approaching, as he left the walk and turned down the narrow path leading to the little wood where I was waiting. It was later than usual, and, after the first greetings were over, it struck me that he looked pale and seemed preoccupied—excited. Before my doubt had time, however, to take any definite shape, the blow came.

"Margaret," he began, "what will you say?—I am going away to India."

"Going away!—and to India! Oh, Philip!"

It was all I could gasp : my heart seemed to stand still. Seeing my sudden paleness, my dismayed emotion, Philip soothingly explained the why and the wherefore. It was necessary that one of the principals here should go over for a time to the house in Calcutta : his father considered himself too old, so he was despatching his eldest son.

"I am to stay away only two years at most, Margaret," he concluded, as he sat by me and held my cold hand in his. "And then, when I return ——"

Yes, when he returned. I understood. But in the meantime, what might not happen—and the thought of parting was terrible.

In those days India was so far away. Thousands of miles lay between England and that golden land. A haze of romance hung round it then, it is true, which it has lost now, when people go by train to visit the Pyramids and take a summer trip to Cashmere. *Then* the very name of India called up visions of dusky faces with white silken turbans, of gems and gold, ivory and spices, and marvellous fabrics of strange splendour. But it was so far away ! Months must glide by before there could come any news from those travelling thither. And there were besides, deadly perils of many kinds connected with the distant East.

Philip did his best to comfort me. This voyage, he said, would be beneficial to him in every way. It would give him the experience he needed, improve his prospects, and really hasten, not retard, the date of our marriage. His father had been most kind and liberal, and had sent me a message intended to be cheering, in which he assured me that nothing could be so good for Philip as to see something of the world before he settled down.

Shall I confess what it was that gave me the keenest pain of all—though I tried at first not to recognise the thought and beat it down as selfish and disloyal? It was this; that all Philip's efforts seemed to be directed towards consoling *me*; while for himself, the prospect of change, the excitement and adventure of the undertaking threw his own regret into the background. But I struggled against the feeling; I knew that from all time woman's lot had been to wait, to watch, to stay at home; "that men must work and women must weep;" that the path of active exertion is theirs, and ours the perhaps harder task, to "suffer and be still." Like a ladye of the olden time watching, from that very comfortable eyrie denominated her "bower," her gallant knight's "receding plume," as he galloped away, I resolved to take heart, to be brave and patient, and above all not to be unjust to Philip, to whom love could not be the whole of life, though he loved me well and truly.

Then came the hurried preparations, those miserable days of excitement and suppressed anguish, when we forbear to weep, knowing that we shall have plenty of time for that by-and-by. Philip went up to London, and I sat alone in the little wood or wandered idly about the garden. I could still look upon the flowers of my Eden, "but the trail of the serpent was over them all;" sorrow and fear and change had entered there. Philip came back when all was ready to say farewell. And that chapter of our lives was closed.

III.

MOST people have felt the agony of a great parting; they know the bitter aching that follows it. Time and occupation bring better things to their aid, and they brought them to mine. I settled down quietly to my usual employments, one of which was to help my dear father a good deal in his study. And so cheerfulness returned and hope began to lift its head again.

The months rolled on. Spring gave place to summer, summer to autumn, autumn to the snows of winter, and winter to spring again. And so, by-and-by, the time approached for Philip's return. Uncle William began already to suggest, half jestingly, first one house and then another for our future home; and my dear mother was planning all kinds of dainty dresses for the bridal outfit.

One morning, entering my father's study as usual, I found him in his accustomed place at the library table, his Bible and some books of reference open before him, and the pen he had been using close to his hand. But that hand would never guide the pen again; the noble face was still in death. He had gone from his search after truth here to the perfect truth and cloudless light above.

That blow shattered two lives. My mother never recovered the shock; and when Philip came home to our desolate house, he knew that his return had been in vain, for that I could never leave her

while she lived. He had come to fetch me ; yes, to fetch me ; for it had been decided that he was to return to the East for a few years, his presence there having produced excellent results. And he had liked his sojourn so well that he had gladly acceded, only stipulating to be allowed to return for his wife. He had brought me, with many beautiful and costly gifts, a little sketch of the pretty palm-tree-shaded bungalow which was to have been our future home.

Poor Philip ! the meeting to which we had both looked forward to joyfully was a sad one, and the parting was sadder still. The second parting ! We could not of course now make plans for the future.

Whether either of us allowed our hearts to glance at a future time when I might be free, I cannot tell. But that time came. All too soon, I thought, in my grief and love. My mother, my darling mother, was laid to rest. The early violets and primroses she had loved better than all other flowers were strewn upon her grave, and I, an orphan, was alone in my childhood's home. My home now ; alas, only mine !

Leaving me to indulge my sorrow for a little time, friends rallied round me, and I found my future all planned out. I was to go out to Philip. My dear uncle would not allow me any hesitation or delay. As Philip could not then come home, he said it was my duty to go to him.

He arranged everything ; and, when the time of sailing came, conveyed me to London himself, and saw me on board the vessel in which my passage was taken, a fine East Indiaman. And so, under the special charge of her commander, Captain Dare, and with a heart still full of sorrow and a head bewildered by the suddenness of the change, I bade farewell to all familiar things, and was soon tossing on the wide ocean, in one of the state cabins of the good ship *Orontes*.

IV.

OUT on the wild, dark sea ! How strangely desolate I felt !—especially in the earlier part of the long and dreary voyage. But time and use soothe all things. Captain Dare was kind and attentive ; his wife, a dear elderly lady, was like a mother to me. I gradually improved in health and spirits, and grew to look hopefully and eagerly forward to the meeting with Philip.

Nearer, and nearer yet, the stately ship making her good way. At last, all preliminaries surmounted, we glided into harbour, and were speedily surrounded by boats from the shore. Friends and relatives came crowding on board to greet my fellow passengers. And I began to look anxiously out for the one face I longed to see.

By degrees all the passengers landed, and still no one came for me. I began to feel terribly depressed and uneasy. Something, I felt sure, must be wrong : but what ? Was Philip ill ? Or had he failed to hear of our arrival ? My good friend, Mrs. Dare, remained on

board: "She would not leave me," she smilingly said, until I was in better hands. Of course she knew what I had come out for and to whom I was going.

At last, when I had grown quite sick with apprehension, and Mrs. Dare was gently laughing at me, a lady and gentleman came on board, enquired for me, and introduced themselves to me and to the Captain as Mr. and Mrs. Stanley; and they proceeded to invite me to stay at their house. Of course I enquired for Mr. Philip West. Mr. Stanley answered, with what looked like a strangely-embarrassed air, that he was gone "up country." "You had better go below with Miss West," he added hurriedly, to his wife.

She caught my hand as we descended to the empty saloon, and put me on the sofa beside her. I waited, with a sinking spirit, for what I knew must be bad tidings; though my poor heart, with all its fears and forebodings, never went near the truth. Philip was dead, or Philip was sick unto death—that was what I thought.

Mr. Stanley had followed us down. He paced the cabin; his wife only looked at me through her glistening tears; and neither spoke. It seemed the one was leaving it to the other.

"Is he dead?" I gasped. "Is he dying? Oh, tell me anything but that," I implored in my great dread.

"Tell her, Mary," said Mr. Stanley, "for I cannot." And he went up on deck.

"Tell me," I added, turning to her, my lips dry, my heart beating to suffocation. "Whatever the truth, I can bear it better than this suspense."

"My poor child, my dear young lady," said the good woman, tenderly, as she drew my head down upon her shoulder, "how *shall* I tell you? He is married."

For a few minutes I suppose I lost consciousness. I was stunned. But when that passed away, there swept through me such a surging storm of anguish, bitterness—almost shame—that I cannot bear to recall it even now. "To be wrath with one we love doth work like madness in the brain."

The hours that followed were awful hours. I asked no questions; I wished for no particulars; the bare fact was enough for me. Philip had played me false; he had taken to himself another love, and made her his wife. And though I, of course, could not avoid hearing scraps and small details of the history, I shall not record them here.

My new friends, Philip's friends, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, took it for granted that I should go on shore with them to their house, at least, for the present; but I steadily refused to leave the ship. I would return in her to England, I said; nothing should induce me to set foot in India—to encounter, perhaps, the pity or the ridicule of strangers. No, I felt wounded to the death, and I would creep away somewhere and die alone.

Then my brain gave way ; an attack of fever set in, and for many days I was in a land of shadows. Dreary and desolate enough they were, yet a blessed escape from reality. Nothing could exceed the anxious kindness of the Captain and his wife ; Mrs. Stanley also was often on board : and I struggled back to life at last. I was young and strong, and God helped me through it all. And we set sail for home again.

The voyage did me good, and much of the bitterness passed away. The first face I saw was that of my kind uncle—which at one time I had almost hoped never more to see. He had hurried up to London to be on the spot when the ship should reach the docks ; not, however, expecting that I should be in it.

Mr. Stanley, who was in fact connected with our bank in Calcutta, had written to him to tell of Philip's marriage, even before I arrived in India ; and my poor, sorrowing, uncle had come to town to learn from the captain and his wife, particulars of *me* ; of how I had borne the shock, of the state in which they had left me.

But I do not think he was much surprised to see me. I tried to hide my own feelings to comfort *him*. He and I fully understood one another.

Even though my house had not been let for a term, I could not have gone back to it, and Uncle William wisely and kindly did not press me to go to his. I went to a relative who lived at some distance from my old home. The idea was that I should be there for only a few months, but I stayed there for years. Mrs. James West was as a tender mother to me, and her daughters were like sisters. Thankful was I for the gentle kindness lavished on me, and above all for the rest and peace that came slowly back to me in God's good time. Deadly wounds take long to heal, and, somehow, at first I did not *wish* to be resigned.

So the years and the years went by ; years of quietness and peace. At length the calm was broken. One day there came an Indian letter, re-enclosed to me from the bank at Oldminster. It was from Philip : the first word I had had from him all that dreary time.

He was dying, it said. And, indeed, he had passed away before it reached me, though I knew it not. He was dying : and he could not die in peace till he had asked my forgiveness. It was very short : he had suffered deservedly, he said, for his brief madness ; his home had long been solitary ; and now he was going to confide to my care his only child, his "little Margaret," who would be worse than an orphan at his death. And then he bade God bless me—and farewell.

I wrote to my Uncle William. I bade my kind relatives a sorrowful good-bye. My old home was vacant, and I hastened to retake my abode in it, there to await little Margaret's arrival. Old friends greeted me, old dependants rallied round me, and I began to be happy again.

Margaret came : a fair, sweet, gentle girl, with Philip's eyes and Philip's smile. Oh, how she brought back the love to me !—the old love as well as the new.

And now life has once more a deep, living interest for me, and hope is springing up afresh : not for me, but for others. I have grown again to love the dear shadows that haunt this, my childhood's home, and not to shrink from the memories of the past. There are many changes in the old time : the boys and girls are become men and women ; the men and women are married and gone : some grey heads are laid low, and I read well-remembered names on many a memorial stone in the churchyard ; but Uncle William is hearty still. My child, my Margaret, is a solemn, holy trust ; a never failing source of interest and pleasure ; for she is all I could wish her to be—good, pure, fair, gentle, loving and very tender to me. Sometimes I wonder if she knows.

And now that I have done with plans on my own account, I am beginning them over again for her. When the primroses are dotting the grass, and the pink blossoms are in the trees, and the soft spring twilight falls on all around, often, as of old, the green door opens, and another Philip and another Margaret are wandering side by side in the pleasant garden. I have rheumatism occasionally now and am afraid of the dew ; the dew which does not hurt them ; and I sit indoors and pray God to bless them—my children : and, if it may be so, guard them from such a sorrow as that which desolated me.

Perhaps some day they will take my place here, for the Priory shall be Margaret's, and glad young steps fill the old rooms with joyous life. The Shadow of Death for me will have passed away and given place to the blessed Land where all is sunshine—to which Philip has gone on before.

E. E. W..

JOHN DAVIDSON.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ADONAI, Q.C."

I.

MISS Victoria Egerton sat in a secluded corner of a ball-room, somewhat discontentedly scanning the faces of the dancers just now pacing and circling, to the music of a string band, through the figures of the Lancers. Suddenly she raised herself a little and looked steadily over to the door, her expression slowly brightening into interest.

It was a large ball for a private one, and there were plenty of pretty faces to be seen at it; but there was certainly not one other so pretty or so full of subtle fascination as Miss Egerton's.

The ball was being held at the house of Mrs. Hattley, an elder sister of Miss Egerton's, in the suburbs of a large manufacturing town. This elder of the two sisters, although of course an Egerton like Victoria—granddaughter of an Earl and second cousin to some of the oldest families in England—had, on receiving an offer of marriage from Mr. Hattley, the famous millionaire cotton-spinner, some few years ago, gladly accepted it. Victoria had first been horrified, and then had tried to laugh her sister out of her resolution.

The two girls were at the time living on the bounty of a maiden aunt in London. It was not nice, living on any aunt's bounty, the elder sister argued very sensibly. And then she was distinctly plain. Victoria had considered indignantly that any Egerton could do better than this. So a storm had raged between them for a little while, the aunt unexpectedly supporting Victoria; but it all ended in Sophia Egerton accepting the offer.

Mr. Hattley, a plain-mannered, middle-aged man, had, to tell the truth, waited very complacently for his answer, of course, knowing nothing of the storm. To do Victoria justice, it was more on account of the man's being so decidedly middle-aged and of such distinctly plain manners, than for anything else, that she had objected. Sophia was not pretty, but she was a sparkling, spirited girl of twenty. The Egerton women were always spirited. However, in spite of this opposition, the marriage had taken place, and then Mr. Hattley and Sophia had gone to settle down in Breminely, and Victoria, with the maiden aunt, had started for a town in Germany. After two years in the German town and another year travelling hither and thither, Victoria had come on a long visit to Breminely to her sister's. In the carriage on the way from the railway station, Mrs. Hattley had promised her young sister some pleasant society.

"It isn't a nice town," laughed the girl, glancing out at the smoky atmosphere, "but I'm glad it contains nice people."

"Oh, I hardly know any of *them*," answered Mrs. Hattley, drawing herself up a little. "I referred to people who are staying with me."

"And how does Mr. Hattley like that?" said Victoria, after staring for a moment at her sister.

"I don't know, I'm sure," replied Mrs. Hattley, still more stiffly.

"Well, Sophia," said the girl, as they got out at the portico of Mr. Hattley's palatial residence: "I will only remark that when you began so sensibly by marrying Mr. Hattley, it was a pity you did not continue in the same path."

Then, soon after this home-coming, had followed the ball.

As Victoria sat thus, with her head a little raised, looking earnestly over at the door, Mrs. Hattley came up unobserved and touched her on the shoulder.

"Absorbed in your mania, as usual, Victoria," she said, a little grimly, but casting a quick, loving glance into the girl's beautiful face—she adored her younger sister.

Victoria had never been without a mania of one sort or another since the days of her childhood. It was part of her nature always to be enthusiastic over something. About a year ago she had chanced on a passion for phrenology and physiognomy. During this year she had probably read at least half the books that ever were written on the subjects, and claimed, besides, to have made several important discoveries on her own account. Mrs. Hattley complained that this mania was more grievous than any of the others, for it not only exceeded them in power, but actually appeared to be growing stronger as it became older. Victoria started delightedly round at Mrs. Hattley's touch on her shoulder.

"Sophia," she said, in a quick undertone, "who is the young man standing in that nearest doorway? He has just come in."

"In the nearest doorway," repeated Mrs. Hattley, turning to look. "Oh," rather indifferently, "that is John Davidson."

She studied him in the same absorbed way for a moment longer. "A most remarkable forehead, Sophia," she said, energetically; "a forehead which may prove exceedingly serviceable to me in many ways. Please go round and bring John Davidson here."

Mrs. Hattley attempted, as usual, to remonstrate.

"It is really perfectly ridiculous, Victoria. Besides, I saw you dancing with Sir Archibald. Where is he?"

"If you don't go and secure John Davidson," said the girl, still furtively watching, "he may escape me. I know every line of Sir Archibald's face, and each line is more uninteresting than the other. I sent him away to look for my fan. I shall not dance again to-night."

A few minutes later, with a somewhat indifferent grace, Mrs. Hattley, a little flushed by her repeated incursions about the outskirts of the Lancers, returned with the young man from the doorway.

"Mr. John Davidson—Miss Egerton," she introduced, frigidly.

"How do you do, Mr. John Davidson. Sit down," said Victoria;

and there was so much eagerness in her tone that Mrs. Hattley, already sweeping haughtily away, shivered as if from a sudden chill. This was the very last time, she said to herself, that she should ever encourage Victoria in her mania.

The young man had meanwhile sat down as requested ; a little surprised at the warmth of his reception. He had not merely, as Miss Egerton had said, a remarkable forehead—every one of his clear-cut, strongly-marked features was equally so. Just as Miss Egerton was making a hasty study of his profile, he turned and fastened his eyes—grey and steady and piercing—upon her. He had followed Mrs. Hattley, on his side also, with indifference ; and first the girl's face and then her name had struck him. Of course this must be Mrs. Hattley's sister—the beautiful Miss Egerton. Yes ; and she *was* very beautiful.

Meanwhile Miss Egerton had made her hurried study ; and now launched headlong into conversation just as any other young lady, not a physiognomist, might have done.

“What a very disagreeable town Bremingly is,” she remarked.

The grey eyes, which had been softening into an unconscious smile, suddenly clouded. Mr. John Davidson knew all about the views Mrs. Hattley had as to Bremingly and its people ; and, of course, Miss Egerton was her sister.

“I am sorry you think so,” he answered, gravely. He was sorry ; he had been remarking what a frank, sympathetic expression the girl had, and it struck him as remarkable that she should hold the same narrow view as Mrs. Hattley.

She noticed the change of expression in the eyes, and understood the reason for it.

“Oh, but I was only alluding to the smoke, you know,” she explained, laughing a little ; “and even to that in a general sense. In the particular case of Mr. Hattley's tallest chimney at the manufactory, I rather admire it. I can see the top of that chimney in the distance from my bedroom window, over the trees of the garden. I always rose early abroad, and I have not got out of the habit yet ; and when I am dressed I sit down on the window-sill and meditate upon the white smoke rising out of that tall red chimney up to the blue, quiet sky. Oh, yes, I was not thinking of what I said. I am very fond of Bremingly.”

He kept his eyes fixed on her intently ; he could not decide whether or not she was laughing at him.

“A very good subject for meditation it might prove to you or to any one. It ought to touch your human sympathies, you know, by making you think of all the deft, patient fingers busy at work at the looms below ; and, to move the artistic side of your nature, there is the thought of the looms themselves.”

She bent forward eagerly. “I know I am very hard-hearted, but I seem to lose all recollection of the people just in that very thought

of the flying looms. I picture them to myself with all their vibrating, hurrying hands, and revolving spokes, and droning little wheels, and great, silent, big wheels, until I verily seem to be standing in the midst of them. Machinery in motion has all the awe-inspiring power of some of the grand phenomena of nature."

The dancers were still pacing to and fro; all the gay dresses glittering in the gaslight; the buzz of talk and laughter mingling with the music. He looked away from the girl straight in amongst them; for some reason or other she had touched him strangely.

"Yes; that dull droning of the wheels, how often I have listened to it," he said at length, in an entirely new tone of voice. "There is no music on earth capable of moving me more deeply."

"And yet you are passionately fond of music of other kinds," she remarked, with a quick look at him.

She had found out this from the shape of his brow—but he was not to know that. She was fathoming all the deepest recesses of his nature; she had touched him again.

"There is very little good music to be heard in Bremsingly," he answered, trying to speak indifferently. "I run up to London if there is anything particular going on; and I am often abroad."

"You paint, don't you?" she enquired, in the same eager way.

He almost laughed now, a sudden revulsion of feeling coming to him. The girl was so quick with her questions, she did not even give him time to know his own surprise.

"As much as I have time for," he answered, glancing drolly round at her. "Yes, I am musical, and I paint, and I always was a very good arithmetician. But when I have said that, I am afraid I have said about all. I hope you are not determined to find out very much more. I am a poor linguist, for instance. What scrapes I got myself into at Antwerp, last week! And then I have not always a particularly patient temper."

She met his fun-lit eyes with a look as comical.

"I see; and if I don't take care I shall begin to try it. That is what you would have me understand. By-the-way, which paintings particularly impress you in the Antwerp galleries?"

For an hour and more Miss Egerton and Mr. John Davidson, resolute against all interruptions, sat in this corner and talked of the Antwerp galleries. At the end of that time it was as if they had known each other for years.

The same evening, after the ball was over, Mrs. Hattley attempted once more to remonstrate a little with her sister.

"Victoria, love," she said, "I really think Sir Archibald felt that you had neglected him: and Mr. Beauchamp-Eanniston simply left the ball-room."

But Victoria had been standing at the top of the grand staircase to catch Mrs. Hattley, and she was not to be distracted by such information as this.

"Oh, Sophia, I thank you so much for introducing me to Mr. John Davidson. I have spent a most delightful evening in deciphering his forehead, and have besides discovered several important characteristics about him."

But Mrs. Hattley, with a gesture of impatience, had already passed on to her room.

II.

"WHO is Mr. Davidson?"

It was the morning after the ball, and Victoria stood, with her walking things on, fastening her gloves and speaking to her sister just preparatory to going out. She had been receiving some commission for a fancy-wool shop, and still held a bundle of flossy silk in her one hand as she buttoned the glove with the other. In the middle of the buttoning she asked the above question.

"Mr. *John* Davidson, pray," corrected Mrs. Hattley; "everyone always calls him so. You see there is another Mr. Davidson we know, a very important man indeed, not far from Bremingly. Oh, Mr. John Davidson is really a mere nobody—Mr. Hattley's manager in fact. But he has made some important invention regarding looms, which has brought him into notice, and so, of course, we have to be civil to him. I positively do not understand, Victoria, what you can find so interesting about that young man."

A few minutes later Miss Egerton was wending her way along the crowded suburban high-road leading into the heart of Bremingly. It was a brilliant August morning, and she had on a cool toilette of somewhat delicate shade. As she came fair into the sunshine of the high-road, she put up her parasol with such intense earnestness of manner, that an observer would have judged her in great anxiety as to the probable effect of the sun on her dress.

In point of fact, however, she was completely absorbed in a thought of an entirely different nature. She had studied Mr. John Davidson's forehead last night very carefully, and yet had failed to decipher the existence of this inventive genius of which she had just heard from Mrs. Hattley. This was very serious.

As she walked on thus in profound and particularly sweet-looking gravity, she lifted her eyes and became aware that Mr. John Davidson was just crossing the high-road before her into a side-street. His face was turned towards her—a singularly grave expression on it too—and as she looked he lifted his hat.

Obedying a sudden impulse, she made him a somewhat excited little sign to stop. When she had crossed over and found him standing still, grave and a little pale, waiting for her, she felt almost confused, and could not imagine why she had made him stop.

"Good-morning, Mr. Davidson," she faltered, with heightened colour.

"Good-morning; I hope you are not tired with last night's dancing. I wonder to see you out so early." He was perfectly kind and composed, looking very neat and gentlemanly in his plain grey clothes, but he was evidently expecting her to say why she had stopped him. There were some papers in his hand, and after this first remark he stood in silence, evidently waiting.

But in the one flash of her disturbed blue eyes up to Mr. John Davidson's face, Miss Egerton had recovered confidence. No, she said to herself, she would never have suspected him of this inventive genius; she must, whatever it cost, investigate further. She was writing a paper on this very subject.

"I am going this way," she said, with sweet and easy dignity, and with a little well-bred glance of surprise at his expectant attitude. Then she began walking up the cross-street. Somewhat hurriedly, Mr. John Davidson joined her. Miss Egerton had begun at once again about the Antwerp galleries; and turning her beautiful eyes very frequently round on Mr. Davidson, unheeding the changes in the road, she talked steadily on, amidst the dust and heat, upon the same subject.

Every time Miss Egerton's eyes were turned on him, Mr. John Davidson met them. Beautiful as they were, and sweet, there was a certain scrutinizing look in them which puzzled and a little irritated him. The truth was, he had been haunted and pursued ever since last night by the recollection of Victoria, but he was a little disappointed in her that she could deliberately have waved him to stop to walk down this cross-street with him. He answered her queries as to the pictures with rather less evident interest than he had exhibited yesterday; from time to time even a little stiffly. Perhaps, besides everything else, he was the least bit tired of the Antwerp galleries.

Meantime Victoria was so absolutely enwrapped in her vexation at having failed in such an important point of discernment that she was barely conscious of what she was saying. No, no, she would never have known. Was this all the progress that a year's study had brought her, she asked herself with stern bitterness, an almost tragic expression for the moment flashing into her eyes. She had thought herself a clever physiognomist and phrenologist, and here was a great inventor and she would never have known it. Enthusiastically earnest in her hobby, Victoria's distress was very real. At last, almost involuntary, she put it into words.

"I hear," said she suddenly, with a slight quiver in her tone, "that you are an inventor. I should never have guessed it."

Mr. John Davidson started and quailed. It was of course an awkward remark of Victoria's, quite unworthy of her. Many and many a time before now, not infrequently in a pause of conversation in some drawing-room, people had said, across the room, to John Davidson, that they understood he was an inventor, adding an enquiry as to the nature of his invention. But these had been people visibly incapable

of comprehending the cruel feeling of laceration such dragging forth, with rough grasp, into light, of a delicate and dear idol can cause. He had got into the way of expecting such questions from people of this sort, and of setting his lips and bracing himself up to answer steadily, but this had decended on him just now like a thunderbolt.

All the colour flooded his brow ; but, before he had had time to reply, a strange, soft, sweet change had swept into Victoria's face.

"Hark," she said, pausing and holding up her hand in a listening attitude. "Oh, Mr. Davidson, hark !"

They had just turned into a narrow, very quiet lane, only some fifty yards long, a short cut between two busy streets. It went in a sort of semi-circle, and at the point where Victoria had paused, where there was a deserted two-storied house, came the dull roar of machinery in motion.

At Miss Egerton's abrupt call to harken, Mr. Davidson stood, crossing his arms with a rapid movement and bending his head a little.

There was something going, some great piece of machinery, louder than all the rest, just inside the window, with a thud and a whirl, then a rasping sound and a whirl again. Slowly Mr. Davidson raised his face, all the pain and embarrassment of a few moments ago gone from it, a strange smile hovering about his lips, his eyes slightly dim.

"Yes, I hear," he said, in a tone with a soft ring in it ; "it is a fine sound ; I have listened to it before. That is my loom."

He had turned his face round, in his strange slow way, without altering his bent attitude. Miss Egerton, her beautiful features radiant, met his eyes. A stranger and softer expression than any flashed into both their faces and was gone. Miss Egerton started and went hurrying down the lane, Mr. John Davidson following her.

Neither of them spoke. Miss Egerton was trembling, she could not have told why ; an odd choking sensation at her throat ; feeling, too, as if a dozen years had come and gone since she entered the lane ; feeling as though the old life were long since dead, and this, a new era, had now begun for her. Mr. Davidson was pale and grave as when she had waved him to stop at the entrance to the cross-street. Swift as lightning a total revulsion of feeling came to Miss Egerton. What *was* the explanation of her own intense emotion ? How dared this man call it forth in her ? She abruptly burst into a little peal of laughter.

"Fancy my listening to a loom under a window !" she cried.

Mr. John Davidson paused, raised his head with a jerk and looked blankly before him ; then turned a searching and rapid glance round at the girl, as though this had fallen upon him with such incongruity that he was half unable to comprehend.

Suddenly he paced on with increased rapidity, a terrible change coming to his eyes.

And he had spoken to this girl of his loom !

They were now at the door of Mr. Hattley's factory. Not a word

had crossed either of their lips since Miss Egerton's little mocking remark.

They paused at the door of the factory and Mr. Davidson turned to her, his face expressive of cold disapproval.

"I have come all this way past the woolshop with you," she said, with a little attempt at bravado, "and now I think you ought to go back with me."

"Most willingly," replied Mr. John Davidson, frigidly. And before she could prevent him he had wheeled round and walked to the end of the street with her. At the door of the woolshop he lifted his hat and left her.

It was later in the day, and even warmer, when Victoria got back to Mrs. Hattley's, and in the quiet solitude of her own room she threw herself into an easy chair and burst into a passionate flood of tears.

III.

MORE than a month had passed. It was the last day of September—a chilly, windy morning—and Mrs. Hattley, turning into the courtyard of the factory, in her handsomely-appointed barouche, pulled her sable mantle closer and shivered. As the carriage drew up at the portion of the building where Mr. Hattley's offices were situated, Mr. John Davidson appeared at a doorway. Mrs. Hattley alighted hastily and shook hands very graciously.

During the past month John Davidson had been frequently at the Hattleys'. Mr. Hattley, on the point of starting for an important business trip to America, had much to settle with his manager. Mrs. Hattley had, at the beginning, almost felt offended at Mr. Davidson's extreme formality of manner both to her and Victoria. Often Mr. Hattley would invite him to stay dinner after the business meetings, but it was not often that he would allow himself to be persuaded. It was not that Mrs. Hattley cared much about John Davidson's opinion; but there was something particularly galling in so very evident a resolution that their acquaintanceship should not develop into intimacy. If there was to be any such ban at all, she remarked to Victoria, it should certainly have been on their side, and Victoria had assented.

When all was said, the man was young and good-looking and gentlemanly and talented. Mr. Hattley predicted all sorts of future greatness for him, and Mrs. Hattley, spirited and popular and young herself, did not quite like that he should look so coldly on her and her pretty sister. However, she was glad that Victoria seemed to have lost all interest in deciphering his forehead.

Then a change had come. He had suddenly grown very markedly interested in all pertaining to Victoria, and Victoria, on her side, had appeared to return to the scrutiny of the forehead with vigour. In the middle of this Mr. Hattley had started for America.

Just before his departure his wife had managed to whisper a word of her alarm to him, and he first had opened his placid blue eyes, and then had laughed and said he did not feel himself entitled to interfere.

Then she had tried reasoning with Victoria. There was such a thing, she assured her beautiful sister very gravely, as compromising oneself by studying even a man's forehead too seriously. Victoria had laughed still more than Mr. Hattley.

As the days went on and things seemed to be becoming more pronounced, Mrs. Hattley decided that some serious action must be taken. Victoria was undeniably a great beauty and belonged to an excellent family. The very contemplation of such an union was ridiculous.

She had ordered her carriage this morning, leaving Victoria absorbed in the contemplation of a miniature loom, and had driven along the dusty roads to the factory, determined on what she was to do. The first person she saw, coming out of a side doorway, was John Davidson.

She went over and shook hands with him particularly graciously.

"It is so bitterly chilly," she remarked. "I quite regretted all the way having ordered an open carriage."

"I am sorry there is no fire in here," said Mr. Davidson, opening the door of a little private office. "I can easily have it lighted."

"Oh, no, thank you," she answered; "I am not going to stay." She spoke hurriedly and with a certain trouble in her manner. John Davidson's steady eyes were noting her unusual confusion, and she knew that it was so. "I—I have had a telegram from my husband. He has arrived quite safely at Chicago," she ended, feeling unequal to proceed with what she had to say at once.

"Yes, the journey so far appears to have been remarkably pleasant," he answered, politely. "I had a telegram from him this morning myself."

"Oh, well, Mr. Davidson, the fact is, it was not exactly about the telegram I came. I have something I wish to say to you, and I can only hope that you will accept it in the spirit in which it is spoken. I consider it right to explain to you now what I think my sister Victoria ought to have explained herself at the outset, in case of any misunderstanding on your part—that, being exceedingly devoted to the study of physiognomy, and judging your face and forehead a remarkable one, she has been ardently cultivating your society with a view of improving her knowledge of the science. Mr. Davidson, if you unhappily have mistaken this interest of my sister's for a deeper feeling, I can only say that I regret much that it should be so, and I would ask you to remember, should you be inclined to think hardly of Victoria, that she is very young."

It was not strictly true all this that she was saying to him—not true to the letter; but she looked him straight in the face as she said

it. She was aware that she was not acting honourably in thus misrepresenting what she knew to be her sister's feelings ; but, having made up her mind, she deliberately did it.

Not the faintest quiver of change came to his expression. After Mrs. Hattley finished speaking a perfectly dead silence followed, broken only by the loud ticking of a clock on the mantelpiece.

"I must thank you very much for this warning," said Mr. John Davidson at length, "of which the forethought is so remarkable that you will pardon its taking me completely by surprise. Under the circumstances, however, does it not strike you that any such warning has been a little unnecessary?"

"Under what circumstances?" enquired Mrs. Hattley, drawing herself up and flushing. Mr. Davidson's attitude was still gravely and gracefully polite, but the look of repressed, and very contemptuous, amusement in eyes and mouth there was no longer any mistaking.

"I allude to my immediate departure for America. I start for Liverpool this afternoon. It is true that I must return here ere I set sail ; but virtually, after to-day, I shall have said 'good-bye' to Bremingly. As Mr. Hattley will probably intrust me with the carrying out of the arrangements for our new factories there, it will, in all likelihood, be a year or two before I get back again. Before that time I feel perfectly assured your sister will have removed all danger out of my way by definitely levelling her researches on some object more worthy their attention. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hattley, I must thank you once again for your extreme forethought on my account."

She had complained of feeling cold, and the repose of her manner had over and over again been adjudged perfect ; but with a crimson flush on her face she was hurrying out of the office in a way she would have condemned in her own housemaid.

"This is surely very sudden?" she managed to stammer.

"So far as the early train this afternoon goes, yes ; but a business man's time, you know, Mrs. Hattley, is never his own. I regret that I shall not have an opportunity of giving your sister a final physiognomical interview. You will wish her all success from me in the prosecution of her scientific studies."

A few minutes later Mrs. Hattley, in a mingled fever of indignation and humiliation such as she had never known before, was driving rapidly homewards. She had gone to this man and spoken as she had done, and all the time he had been thinking about them so little that he had never even cared to let them know of his coming departure.

Stay ; he must have told Victoria ; yes, and this was why Victoria had laughed when she had warned her against the danger of such an intimacy. It was too bad, too unkind of Victoria, not to have explained matters.

Arrived at home, the tears of vexation rising in her eyes as John

Davidson's face of repressed amusement presented itself to her mental vision, she went at once, indignantly, to her sister.

"Victoria," she began, "why did you not tell me John Davidson was going away to America?" Then, as Victoria's start spoke more plainly than words: "What! you did not know either! He is leaving early this afternoon, and will not be back for a year or two. Just to think," she went on, a sudden and very illogical feeling of anger sweeping across her at John Davidson's indifference to her sister, as she noticed the strange bent attitude Victoria's figure had taken: "Just to remember the kindness we have shown that man, and he does not even tell us he is going away, or care to say good-bye. Is it not too humiliating?"

But Victoria, the bright and strong and high-spirited, answered nothing at all. She had fainted.

It was evening; a windy, dusty evening—just such as the morning had been premonitory of; and Victoria, a long cloak over her black lace dress, was beating against it alone—away down amidst the crowds in the city. Rough workmen on their way home; and pre-occupied clerks; and bustling message boys; and apple-sellers shivering at their stands—hardly one but turned a more or less curious glance after the girl's graceful, hurrying figure.

She went rapidly on, without once raising her eyes. It was still very early evening, but from end to end of the sky there was nothing but a dead, lavender-coloured gloom, that cast a dreary shadow over everything. By-and-bye Victoria turned into the little lane passing the back of the factory. For the first time she put back her veil and looked up.

She had reached the angle of the lane, above which towered the back of the factory, and now came to a dead stand there.

The lane was perfectly deserted, and she stood in the middle and fastened her eyes feverishly on the building she had been determined to come to: to gaze just once at that building before putting aside for ever all old thoughts, and had stepped away unseen in her absorbing unhappiness, indifferent as to what alarm Mrs. Hattley might suffer. She would never be happy again, she told herself; never be a free, light-hearted girl again. The wound might be partially healed in the years to come, but she would never be quite the same woman again. She had loved John Davidson, and he had slighted her.

Work was all over for to-night. The great grey back of the building, at which she stood gazing, was silent as the grave. From the slow deepening of the gloom overhead it seemed as if there might soon be rain.

All at once, as Miss Egerton stood there, a sudden sound made her start round.

John Davidson, whom she had believed to be miles away in the hurrying train, was standing beside her.

His head was a little bent forward; he was straining his piercing eyes at her as if, from the mere turn of her attitude, he would fathom her to the very soul.

How well he loved her! Little did Mrs. Hattley think that the very first idea of his departure had come to him whilst the terrible purported disclosure as to Victoria's feelings was being made. He knew at once, in that moment, that his only hope out of a misery which might end in the destruction of his whole future, lay in the instant excitement of new scenes, a new line of life and thought. It never occurred to him to doubt Mrs. Hattley in the slightest. He remembered all; the way Victoria had looked at him; her laugh while listening under the window of the factory. Of course she had been mocking him all along. How that laugh haunted and stung him. He had announced himself summoned abroad, and made hasty preparations for leaving by an afternoon train. Then a chance had delayed him until evening.

He had been making some indispensable purchases; bidding smiling adieus from time to time too, with a canker-worm bitter as death at his heart, and talking much of the new American factories.

Suddenly, in the very middle of one of these adieus, he had been struck dumb by the sight of Victoria's hurrying figure. Tearing himself away unceremoniously, leaving his friend looking after him in surprise, he had swiftly followed her, filled with a vague hope he could not have defined. He had come fair up after her into the lane here, and had found her enwrapped in contemplation of the point he, too, only a little earlier, had been contemplating with sad emotion.

"Victoria," he burst out, "I have been deceived; it was not true about the physiognomy; or supposing it to have been true at first—you love me now. You have loved me—oh, tell me that it is so—from the day that we stood here together listening to my loom."

It had come so suddenly on her. In the middle of the whirl of her other emotions she had an awful sensation of fear at the wild beating of her own heart. She could not move. She raised her eyes and looked at him and waited until she could speak.

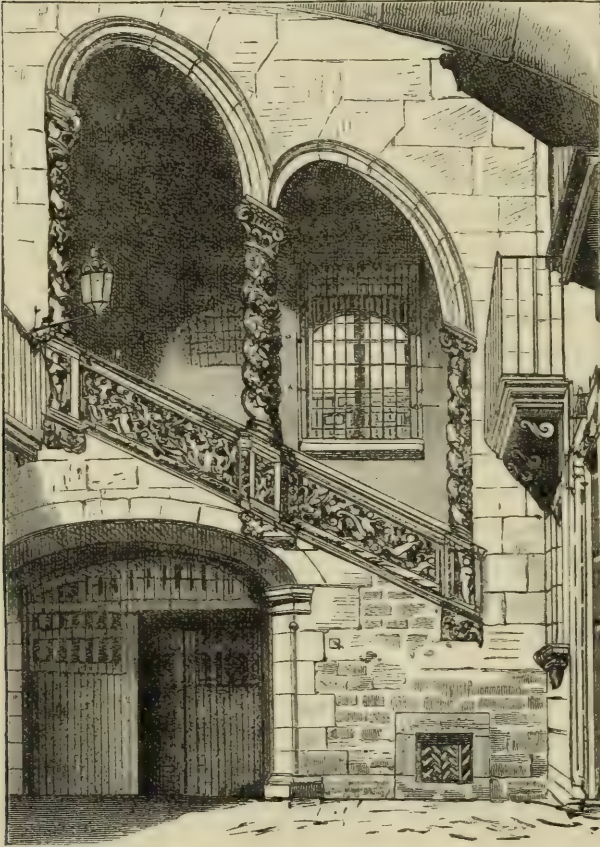
"From that day—certainly," she answered, distinctly, at last. "I cannot attempt to deny it. I think, even, that I had loved you from the night I first saw you enter the ball-room. But what does it matter?—you are going away."

He came forward and closed his two hands tenderly over one of hers—his features, that had been set so firmly, quivering with deep emotion. He had never, not even a moment ago, dreamed of such an intoxicating answer as this.

"Never, now," he said, brokenly. "Ah, Victoria, it was for your sweet sake that I was leaving; and for your sweet sake I will remain."

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

By CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.



Palma, Nov. 13, 1886.

MY DEAR E. — In my letter yesterday I remarked that there was no Narbonne station here to administer coffee in the small hours of the night. But neither in this Fonda de Mallorca (Fonda, you are aware, is Spanish for Hotel) nor in any other, is that often possible. The utmost you can make sure of during these "sleeping hours," is a night porter, heavy-eyed and slow of step, who admits you, with a sort of resigned air which seems to follow you reproachfully as you wind your flight up to your room. This last sounds, somehow, suspiciously

like a jeu-de-mot ; an indiscretion of which I am incapable. But I cannot quite trace it out, and the phrase must go.

Having started the subject, perhaps you would like a description of this Fonda de Mallorca, and of our daily life, as it has passed up to the present moment.

Do not picture us as revelling in all the luxuries one has grown accustomed to in this fast expiring nineteenth century. It has come to this certain fact in travelling, that mere comfort is not enough. We must have refinement and luxury in the form of painted ceilings and gilded walls and thickly carpeted floors. The cuisine must be perfect, the appointments without flaw. Palaces of a hundred years ago were not more gorgeous than the inns of to-day, whilst monarchs who swayed sceptres, whose smiles were promotion and whose frowns meant death, lived far more simply their daily lives. You will wisely observe that there is a quid-pro-quo in the matter,

and one has to pay for all this display and self indulgence. That is quite true, and travelling has now become a costly pleasure, and sometimes almost a sinful.

But in Palma de Mallorca, one's luxuries are restricted; and, fortunately, there is a corresponding limit to the charges when your bill is presented. As yet we have had no bill, but I write with the "authority of the speaker:" no less a personage than the good and amiable landlord himself, who, on our arrival, volunteered several exchequer items we did not ask for, but were willing to learn.

Here we have no painted ceilings or carpeted floors. Our rooms are tiled or paved; and in spite of a very charming atmosphere, your first sensation on rising in the morning, when your feet come into contact with the cold stone, is decidedly thrilling. I shall never forget my introduction to this emotion; for though you are supposed to have a small bedside carpet or a mat, this, like your slippers, or your match-box, is certain to have mysteriously gone astray during the night.

I am persuaded that my room is haunted. A mouse could not squeak or a pin fall without waking me; I have retired with everything in its place; I have passed an undisturbed night: and yet the next morning I have found my carpet in the further corner of the outer room, looking very much ruffled and demoralised.

Not only must my room be haunted, but these Palma ghosts must have a special affection for bedside carpets. Possibly they were denied these luxuries in life, and are now taking out their revenge. I have asked H. C. whether his experience is the same as mine, but he only stares vacantly; doesn't know whether he has a carpet or not; doesn't care; doesn't see how anyone could care. Of course, a poet must have a soul above carpets.

My room is divided into two compartments, and I make one compartment my bedroom, the other my reception-room. I have held levées since I came here, but they have, happily, been levées of imagination only; peopled with ghosts of the dead-and-gone, and recollections of all the living who make our world. The doors of the rooms are peculiar. They have no handles to them, like the ordinary christian doors of a civilised country. If you are at home, you must lock yourself in; and if any one knocks you must rise and open.

Thus when Francisco comes every morning with hot water, and to generally constitute himself my groom of the chambers, I have to perform the undignified office of getting up to admit him, and hastening back to my couch to escape the dangers of a sudden chill.

He brings up the water in a small tea-kettle with a narrow spout—another Mallorcan peculiarity, so far, at any rate, as this fonda is concerned. It takes quite ten minutes to pour out, by which time the water has cooled down to an agreeable temperature of some ten degrees below freezing point. I one day tried to remove the lid, and pour the hot stream in a small cataract, but the lid refused to come

off. Apparently it was not meant to do so, and I wondered, like George III. with the dumplings, how the water ever got inside. I suppose they have false bottoms to them.

About an hour later, H. C. makes his appearance, and shortly after, Francisco comes in with our first breakfast: a truly conventual meal consisting of coffee and rolls, without butter.

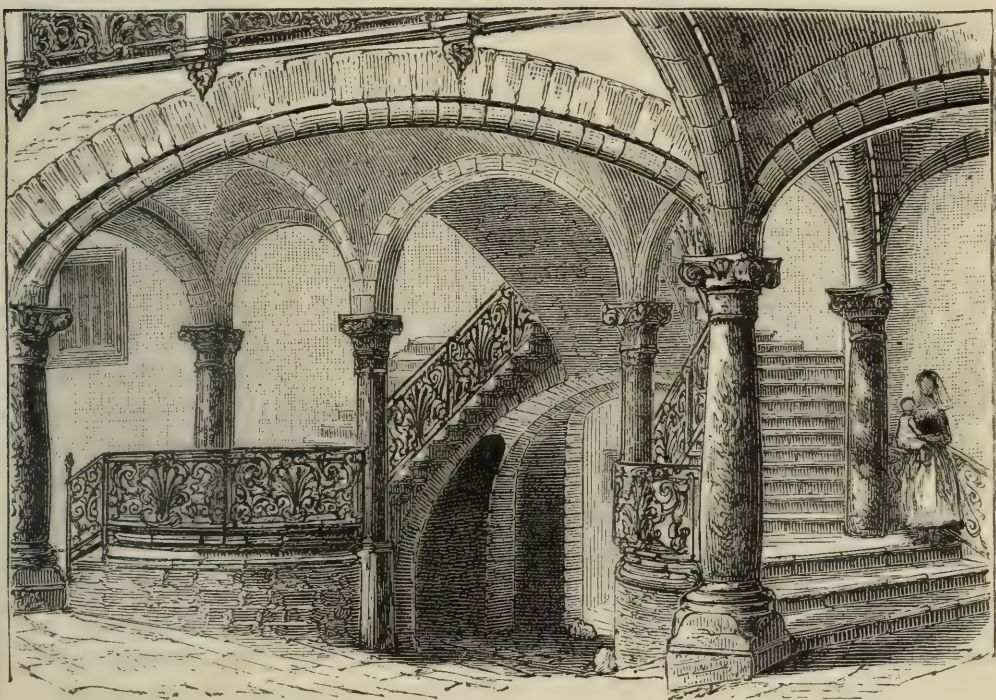
Butter in Majorca seems to be unknown—at least of its own manufacture. The first morning they brought us something which looked like the real thing, and we took it in faith. We have not yet recovered from the fright. We thought they had brought us poison, and hurriedly set about making our wills. If the option were now given me of taking that or the fatal bowl, I would choose the latter, especially if administered at the hands of a fair Rosamund. *She*, I am aware, was the victim in days gone by, but I would permit her now to have her revenge. This butter that they eat, is brought over from Spain. To describe it as rancid is not to give you the faintest idea of its horrors.

We fell back upon dry bread, to which I am still devoted; but H. C. has purchased unto himself sundry pots of jam, which, like Mr. Gladstone, he seems to think “an excellent substitute for butter.” He is fast creating a dearth in Palma of this luxurious article of food. But do not imagine that it is like our English jams. It is a sort of jelly, soft and sickly, like French confiture, reminding one of nothing so much as the days of gray powders and childish convalescences. Like the late Lord Derby, who preferred the gout to a certain prescribed wine—I prefer my bread dry.

They also bring us—it is a universal custom in Majorca—each a small round cake, or bun, of pastry, very pleasant and agreeable. It is made with olive oil, and is so light that you might almost blow it away. We are not wise or we should leave it to the last, but we invariably begin upon it first. I would restrain my ardour, but H. C. is impatient, and I know that if mine were in existence when his has departed this life, I should stand small chance of my share of the good things of a Mallorcan breakfast. The weak, you know, always go to the wall. The first morning we both declined this delicacy; but have since “acquired” the taste which generally comes with perseverance. *Le goût, comme l'appétit, vient en mangeant.*

The first two mornings we thought to spare the waiter trouble, and went down to this first breakfast; but the room was each time in possession of two or three Spaniards outsmoking each other with a tobacco which was not to our fastidious liking. It was too much for our sensitive nerves. We gave up philanthropy and the breakfast-room, and are much more at ease in our little sitting-room. It is humbly furnished, but it is all our own. A few wooden chairs, a deal table covered with oil-cloth, a chest of drawers in one corner, vacuum in the other three corners—these are our household goods in Palma de Mallorca, and we are more than content.

Our windows face the East and are immediately opposite the Palma Club, where the *jeunesse dorée*, alike with those whose sun is declining, most do congregate for billiards, smoking, lounging and gossip. Whether the latter ever degenerates to scandal, is more than I can at present tell you. It is said that human nature in its broad outlines is the same all the world over. If this be true—and I have no reason to doubt it, and have no arguments at hand to disprove it—then scandal cannot be unknown to Palma. But for the large upper windows the building might be taken for a convent; from the outside, of course; for within it does not in the least resemble a community of nuns.



A PALMA COURT.

I will not enter into a description of the games at billiards, small tables, absence of pockets, mode of playing, &c. &c. This would be so much Greek to you, who have the good taste not to join other ladies when visiting their brothers' billiard-rooms.

To us to watch the players sometimes affords half an hour's idle amusement, as we also lounge and smoke from our windows, whence we overlook this little world. H. C. is strong in the matter of billiards, and tries to raise in me an enthusiasm I pretend to feel—and do not. He gives me fifty, and I allow him to win. This keeps him in excellent temper, which is everything, whilst to lose a game at billiards is to me a mere bagatelle. I would not say as much of chess. There I have the advantage. I give him a queen and a rook, and beat easily.

At half past eleven comes the second breakfast, in this Fonda de Mallorca, for which we go down to the dining-room. But our nerves by this time have gained tone, and we are able to support, however much we may dislike, our food flavoured with tobacco smoke.

To say the truth, it is not very general or overpowering. One or two men come in with lighted cigarettes, but they put them down when more substantial matter is given them to digest. Both at lunch and dinner, however, they do not scruple to return to the evil of their ways at the end of their banquet, no matter what stage your own may have reached.

We live here better than we anticipated. We had heard that hotels in Palma were all bad; that civilisation was very far behind the age; that one had to rough it to a very great extent; that food was insufficient, not good, badly dressed and uncomfortably served. As far as Palma is concerned, and the Fonda de Mallorca, this may, to a great extent, be contradicted.

It cannot be denied that if Palma had a large and well organised hotel, appointed more like the hotels one is generally accustomed to—the pampered luxury, in short, to which I have just taken exception—its attractions would be increased, and more visitors would lighten it with their countenance. But though it is behind the age in this respect, it has made great strides in the last quarter of a century. Fifty years ago such a thing as an inn was said to be unknown in Majorca, and a visitor going there, found himself very much of a sojourner in a strange land, at the peril of dying for want of the common necessities of life.

This state of things has passed away, giving place to one which is not only tolerable, but to be enjoyed by all who are of a reasonable turn of mind.

Our second breakfast generally begins with an omelette, dressed to perfection. If Majorca fails in cows and in supplies of milk and butter, fowls must certainly be abundant and excellent. The supply of eggs never fails, and there are many ways of serving them. Two substantial dishes follow the omelette, and not infrequently one of them is pork.

On these occasions I am deprived of a part of my sustenance, whilst H. C., on the contrary, counts them as feast days, to be marked with a red letter. So gross a taste in a refined poet is a little surprising, but human nature, like the physical world, is given to contradictions. We have known a warm Christmas, and we have seen snow in harvest. In all matters concerning pork, I am as revolted as if I had been born a Hebrew of the Hebrews; and if I dared make a *jeu-de-mot*—a habit to be held in abomination—I would say that the only hog's-head I appreciate is that which contains pure Bordeaux wine.

No wonder that pork is frequently served in Palma, for I am told that pigs are one of the staple commodities of the island: one of

their great branches of industry, chief sources of trade, principal objects of exportation.

"This accounts for the Barcelona sausages one hears so much about," said a lady who had given me this information before leaving England; and I stood convicted; for though familiar with Barcelona nuts, I had never heard of its sausages.

In a moment, however, it occurred to me that the dear creature was confused in her geography and had substituted Barcelona for Bologna. It was a slight variation, but this was of no consequence. The difference of a few hundred or a few thousand miles is a very trifling matter to the feminine temperament, whose world is made up of feeling and sentiment, whilst mere accuracy in detail or description goes for nothing. I could write pages upon the inconsistency of the female mind, but I spare you the infliction. Not that it would tell home to one (I do not wish to pay you a compliment) who is a signal exception to the generality of her sex.

And how quickly the feminine brain jumps to conclusions, right or wrong, leading to all sorts of complications, cross questions and crooked answers. Do you remember the very week before leaving England for Majorca, I had the honour of making one at your dinner table? Miss R. happened to remark that her brother, a Commander in the Royal Navy was some time ago in Calcutta, having gone out in one of the P. and O. boats, in charge of the mails. It was the custom in those days. "I suppose," said your very intimate friend, Miss A. H., from across the table, with a great air of innocence: "I suppose that is what is meant by a *Post* Captain?" Yet Miss A. H., whose life is passed amongst military, if not naval, men, ought to have known better.

Does this show the poverty of our language? Or prove the inconsistency of the female mind in jumping to conclusions by means of instinct, not reason? Or only betray a vivid imagination on the part of Miss A. H.? Perhaps something of all three. Many effects may spring from the same cause, just as the evil deeds of a sire are often felt to the third and fourth generation.

Let us finish up our subject of the Majorcan pigs.

Over here, I am told they are the finest in the world. They are well looked after, well housed, well fed. They wander about the woods and tracts of country, and find unlimited supplies. Whether they take observations and enlarge their minds, I know not, but they gather up food and greatly add to their bodily dimensions. Like the aldermen of the famous City of London, they might write upon their backs: "Widened at the expense of the Public." They are black as beavers—the pigs, not the aldermen—and of immense size. The animal is as precious to the Majorcan as to the Irishman. But what a difference in the races—not the animal race but the human. The swine-herds—they who have the care of the pigs—are by no means attractive, though some of them are said to be often rich and

flourishing—for Majorcans. One came into the dining-room only this morning, of whom I will presently give you a benefit.

But many of the owners of these animals are gentle, kindly, and easy to be entreated. They make an occupation, not a companion, of their protégés. When the time for exportation comes, these are so fat that, once down, it is difficult to get them up again. The herds in charge go about the vessel on its voyage from Palma to Barcelona, and poke and prod and stir up the unfortunate animals with a long wand or pole. They are not allowed to lie down or they might die, but must remain, as far as possible, upright on their legs; carrying as best they can in the rolling vessel, the weight of their bodies and the consequences of their greediness. Does remorse ever overtake them on such occasions? I don't know whether pigs, any more than many human beings, have consciences.

The decks, I hear, are crowded. Pigs here, pigs there, pigs everywhere. Pigs, in short, are everything, passengers nothing. The noise throughout the night is to be imagined, not described. If this be true, then shall we have a benefit on our return to Barcelona, when that time comes. Then must the Majorcans look to their ways, and not expect their beautiful island to be visited and appreciated until the reign of a better order of things has set in.

For it is undoubtedly a beautiful island, with much to attract and allure. Hills and valleys; the richest and most productive vegetation; orange groves and oliveyards and vineyards; the refined and refreshing pomegranite in abundance, the green fig in profusion, the prickly pear and the exquisite fruit of the wild arbutus. It has the loveliest shores, the grandest of cliffs, bluest of seas; that everchanging and mysterious main, its expanse a foreshadowing of eternity, its stormy moods a type of our own life, the uncertainty of the fate awaiting those who launch forth upon its waters, an emblem of death. The Mediterranean is beautiful everywhere, but it is especially so in Majorca.

As yet we have only seen it from Palma. Hills and valleys and orange-scented groves, cliffs and caverns: all these for us have yet to come. But I accept in faith what I have heard, and what I hope future letters may confirm.

One item I can at once bear witness to—the beauty and abundance of their grapes and apples. These form part of our daily dessert at breakfast and dinner. The grapes are the most delicious in existence. In the market place for the sum of one penny you can burden yourself with a rich feast of them. At table the supply is unlimited. If you take half-a-dozen bunches, one after another, no surprise is felt, no one is shocked—except you who take them. At the third bunch you begin to feel guilty, at the sixth your cheek is suffused with the blush of shame.

They are unlike other grapes. Their yellow skins are exceedingly thin, and they contain the sweetest, most refreshing, most whole-

some liquid. They are all liquid. A bunch disappears and you feel that you have taken a cooling draught, but no digestible substance. The supply might go on for ever—or at any rate as long as you are at table, and still, from their peculiar nature, you would not be satiated. Like the Irishman to whom claret was given when he had been used to whisky, you might drink the sea dry of them and seem “no forwarder.”

So with the apples, though here you have substance, not liquid, and desire and quantity are limited. They are the most delicious in the world. Small red and white fruit with delicate red veins running about their surfaces, faintly pencilled as the rivers on a map. They bear a refined flavour, more like a nectarine than anything else, and properly prepared and fermented, would surely yield nectar for the gods. Mortals may be grateful for them in their natural condition.

These fruits form the concluding and by no means most indifferent portion of our meals.

Punctuality is not at all an item to be observed on these occasions. Breakfast is supposed to be at half past eleven, dinner at half past six. The usual thing is for the table to begin to fill an hour after the appointed time. It is useless to attempt to sit down before twelve and seven o'clock, and even then your own meal is half over when others are beginning theirs. This is enough to drive the best cook in the world stark staring mad. In the case of the worst, of course it would not matter; the result would be the same—all equally bad.

But at the Fonda de Mallorca, if the cook is not a Francatelli or a Soyer, he is far from being an ill master of his art. (Has it not been decided by an incontrovertible council headed by Sir Henry Thompson that cooking is one of the Fine Arts?) He is especially good in his *entrées*, which require skill and punctuality, and I often wonder how he manages, at the interval of an hour to send them up apparently still perfect. Possibly he prepares them in relays; just as a battalion of soldiers in a war, will come up to the front and take the place of those who have gone before.

This dinner hour is our Palma purgatory: or at least it is mine. H. C. rather likes the study of human nature it affords him, though I defy him—or even Shakespeare—to leave the room with a single poetical idea in his brain.

Dinner itself is very much like lunch on an extended scale. We begin with soup, the one bad thing here, which I discreetly pass. Fish comes round after the third or fourth course. This hardly accords with one's habits and wishes; mais à Rome, &c., &c. One can put up with and even grow used to everything of this sort; but the company at table and the inferno that rages long before dinner is over: this, on the contrary, grows daily more intolerable.

The greater portion of the guests are people who visit these islands on business, who know each other, fraternize, have tastes and habits

in common. They are most of them Spaniards, excitable, easily roused, impetuous. In their calm moments, you would think them about to murder each other, and you look for the flash of steel, and the smoke of fire; and you think of the horrible fate of the Kilkenny cats; but when roused and heated and angry—oh then, le déluge: and the colour would surely be crimson?

It has never yet reached this climax; but our stay here is only beginning—who knows what may happen before the end? A general fray, perhaps; a vendetta; in which innocent and guilty will alike suffer, and your correspondent will all at once cease to torment you: and there will come a sudden pause, a blank, a great calm, both to you and to us.

Up to the present hour we have experienced only the amiable stage. There has been no flash of steel, no smoke of fire, no red deluge. The inferno begins when dinner has well advanced, and the excellent wine, gratuitously supplied in large white glass decanters, has been freely consumed. By this time you would say war to knife was going on. The noise is uproarious, deafening, confusing, bewildering. They all appear to be contradicting each other, but though I understand little of what is said, I believe it is only ordinary conversation. Yet every now and then, one flashes up unmistakeably, leans forward, shouts at his adversary, glares, seems on the very point of proceeding to extremities. Then a gradual subsidence, and bloodshed is once more averted.

One man continually uses and spreads out his hands, as if he were laying down the law or preaching a sermon. He is quite as emphatic as the others, but not quite so loud; yet, if anything, more irritating. Of their manners in general it is perhaps as well to say nothing. Only those who, like H. C., are blessed with unsusceptible nerves and iron muscles, can stand these things with equanimity. Of course, if an English lady were present, she could *not* be present—if you can understand this Irishism.

This goes on day after day. We are a small party of four Englishmen, at our end of the table; for singularly enough two English gentlemen crossed over with us from Barcelona, and our lines have since run very much in the same direction.

"It never rains, but it pours," is an old and vulgar saying; and whereas Englishmen very rarely visit this Island of Majorca even in solos, a quartette must needs cross over in the same vessel.

To one of them, Majorca is a familiar friend, and it says something for the island that he is again visiting it for an indefinite period. Of course he may have special attractions to bring him here. On a previous sojourn, the dark flashing eyes of some beautiful *houri*, or the pensive sapphire orbs, blue as the Mediterranean, of some fair Madonna, may have taken his fancy captive. These influences are irresistible as the fatal basilisk—draw as inevitably as the pole draws the needle. Of this I know nothing, and I have not been

indiscreet enough to enquire. But I think I may add, without indiscretion, that he will find it difficult to match his own eyes, for they are two of the brightest and most beautiful I ever saw.

An invasion of four Englishmen must have astonished our good landlord, and he no doubt felt that the golden age had risen at last, and Palma was about to become the fashion. Before that day dawns ; if ever Palma is frequented by the English even in small numbers ; he will find it necessary to reorganise his establishment, build himself another dining-room, and separate the two nations on those very important occasions which to so many form the great object of existence.

Only this morning at breakfast, one of these swine-herds (or pig-farmers, if the word may be used) came in. I had never seen one before, and was not edified. On second thoughts—for you would not like it—I will spare you any description, and merely mention that, according to the custom of his clan, his head was tied up tightly in a cotton handkerchief, knot and ends behind. If they only tied them in front, starched the ends and stuck them out like a horn on each side, the likeness would be perfect.

I had never come across such a specimen, much less sat at the same table with him. His presence filled the room. Luckily, H. C. and three empty chairs were between him and the “wind of my nobility,” or I must have retired.

H. C. looked at him steadily for some time, and then turned to me.

“Another most interesting production,” he observed. “I delight in him. The contemplation of this object gives me the greatest satisfaction. Indeed the whole company in general affords me the most supreme pleasure.”

No doubt this was said partly to irritate me. It succeeded. I had just finished my sixth bunch of grapes, and rose. H. C. had only begun upon his first, and he had also half a dish of olives to get through—things I detest, but for which he would sacrifice his conscience.

“Then pray take your supreme pleasure to the full,” I answered. “I leave you to its enjoyment. In my own room, it will be a case of *Nunquam solus, quam minus cum solus* : a trite proverb, but a compliment one cannot pay you down here.”

Five minutes later he appeared, pale and agitated.

“What’s the matter,” I asked. “Have you seen a ghost?”

“After you left the dining-room,” he gasped, “another specimen appeared on the scene. He was too much even for me ——”

“He must indeed have been bad !” I interrupted.

“You cannot have an idea *how* bad,” murmured H. C., faintly. “Might I ask you for a little eau-de-cologne and a tumbler of French brandy.”

“Certainly,” I replied, rising with the occasion to the height of a

ministering spirit. "And presently you shall have some tea. You look very bad, too ; very bad indeed—but in a different way."

For we make our own tea in our own sitting-room, quite openly, and with the full knowledge and approbation of our hosts. We tried theirs the first two days and then gave it up in despair. Coffee here is excellent, but they persisted in making the tea with greasy water, with a result not to be described. It was like nothing I ever heard of above the earth or on the earth—I do not wish to know anything of what goes on under the earth. It is certain that only extreme thirst could dispose of this singular decoction.

"Necessity is the mother of invention"—a saying you must have heard before. I do not think it belongs to Shakespeare, but it is worthy of him, so much human nature does it contain. On our third morning we sallied forth for a tea-making apparatus, ransacked the town, and at last found the exact thing. Perseverance surmounts obstacles. You see that I am philosophical to-night, and have not forgotten my copybook days. We returned in triumph with a lamp, a teapot, and a supply of spirits-of-wine beautifully disguised in a large eau-de-cologne bottle for the sake of respectability.

When Francisco saw the whole contrivance set up and flaming, he was delighted ; when the water boiled and poured out tea, he was amazed. The very small cups not being to our liking, he sent off a special messenger to an adjoining china shop for two bowls without handles and with impromptu saucers, and these he brings up to us nightly. We are much gratified.

And I think we have never enjoyed tea so much as now, when we make it somewhat under difficulties and make it ourselves. Cooks, they say, never enjoy their own dinners, but I am sure they must draw the line at their own tea. Of course H. C. has written a poem upon the subject, beginning :

" The greatest bliss, beloved, in Paradise will be,
To roam those fields Elysian and sip Bohea."

And he scarcely ever raises the cup to his lips without adding, as he puts it down : " Grateful and comforting." I tell him this remark is not original, and therefore unworthy of him, but he says they are the most appropriate words he can think of.

It is very necessary here to be in favour with the domestics—and we are happily popular with this fastidious class. They are very independent, and if you offend them, you will probably suffer in consequence.

Our hosts are very civil and obliging, but we have never seen them on this floor since we entered the doors of the Fonda ; except on the morning of our arrival, when the landlord politely conducted us to our rooms. Thus left to themselves, the servants follow their own lead.

They are all men. Francisco is an Italian, and an exception to

the general rule. You may order him about as much as you please, and it delights him to do your bidding. Antonio, our little chamberlain, wants no small persuasion to do his work in decent time. We ask him with the greatest courtesy to be good enough to put our habitation in order, and by that means we gradually, very gradually, get swept and garnished. Otherwise, we should be able, on Saturday night, to write down the catalogue of our week's sins in the dust which had been accumulating since Monday morning. They do just as they please, what they please, and when they please.

But I have no sort of fault to find with them, for to us they have been very obliging. Antonio, our little chamberlain, is extremely ugly, therefore you will not be surprised to hear that his ruling passion is vanity. By judiciously administering to this weakness, we get on extremely well ; and like those cages that go about the streets of London, containing birds, beasts and fishes, all mixed up together and presided over by a depressed cat, we are a very happy family.

If we want him, we merely go outside and clap our hands, as if we were applauding a popular actor. There are bells in the hotel, but everywhere this clapping of hands is the more general signal of distress or need. We have often rung our bell six times, and at the sixth pull it has brought itself down, but it has failed to bring anyone up. But a hand-clapping receives immediate attention. By this we know that we are popular : for some of these noisy Spaniards may clap by the hour and shout themselves husky ; no one comes. If they were to beat their breast and tear their hair, I don't think they would come any the more.

This vain little chamberlain is especially proud of his voice. In our presence he restrains himself, but in rooms near at hand and in passages he gives vent to the strange power of his lungs.

His music is weird, extraordinary, indescribable. It is utterly impossible to endeavour to make out a melody. It possesses none. It is the wild music of the island. To me it is more than unpleasant. It fills me with a sort of nameless, mysterious horror. If there can be madness in music, it is here. The very street children catch up the singular sounds, which occasionally border upon howling. But I, to whom music is second nature, cannot in the least reproduce them, or acquire them, or write them down. I am baffled, defeated ; but I cannot say that I feel disgraced.

This music, like nothing earthly I ever heard, must, I think, be a tradition handed down to them from the Moors, altered and disfigured in character through the filtering process of long centuries. For it is six hundred years and upwards since the reign of the Moor ceased in Majorca.

Our chamberlain makes rooms and passages re-echo with this wild production, delivered with stentorian energy. At the end of each verse he comes in with some excuse to mark the effect upon us. Woe

be unto us if we did not look beatified. In truth we are in ecstasies, quite as much as the mystics of old, but they are ecstasies of misery. Very opposite causes will produce apparently similar results ; and I have heard that whether you burn, or whether you freeze, the sensation is the same. So Antonio applies a flattering but very mistaken unction to his soul.

We escape upwards sometimes from this noise to the roof of the hotel. It is perhaps midday and the sun is glowing with a brilliancy you would pay for in gold in an English November. The sky, of the most liquid blue, finds its reflection upon those fair waters of the Levant. We are surrounded by white, Eastern looking houses. Above them the wonderful Cathedral rears its amber head ; and from this point we have the benefit of its beautiful tower.

Below it, is the old Moorish Palace, though with very few Moorish traces left about it. Encircling all are the undulating hills, cutting the clear background of the sky in long wavy outlines. On a lower ridge stands the ancient Castle of Bellver, overlooking the sea. The view is warm, sunny, Eastern ; very much of a dream. It might be the dream of a lotus-eater, so singular is its effect upon the brain. Beside us a cage, large as a room, holds a number of pigeons. We go up to them, and find them tame and approachable. Indeed, they come to us and in their own language plainly ask to be let out : a liberty we have no intention of taking. They would like to soar above all this world, into that liquid blue ether. So should we ; but they must not at our bidding ; and we cannot at any one's bidding. We would often fly if we could ; and probably much of what we came upon unexpectedly would make us the most wretched beings in existence. Some people are always dreaming of flying ; but surely these, whether sleeping or waking, must be naturally light-headed ? I never dreamed of flying in my life, and leave you to draw the evident deduction.

On this roof we often sit for half an hour at a time, indulging in our elevation above the world. Antonio's voice comes with a delightfully far-off effect, like the whisper of a giant. He thinks us in our room, and if all this is meant for our edification, he is wasting his sweetness on the desert air. But probably he is driving some other unhappy mortal to the verge of madness.

Let us descend to the ordinary level of mankind. Walk with me down the street we have just been overlooking from the house-top. It is one of the least interesting of the Palma thoroughfares, but it leads to those steps of which I enclosed you a sketch in my last letter : conducts to a small triangular garden, where tropical plants flourish and spread their beautiful fronds and branches : ends at the port and harbour, which is always busy, always has life and movement about it ; always discloses that wonderful sapphire sea beyond.

Turn to the right, and you quickly reach the Lonja. Next to

the Cathedral, this is certainly the most remarkable building in Palma.

It is large, square, gothic, dating from the first half of the 15th century. The exterior is not very remarkable, though relieved at each corner by octagonal towers with indented battlements, whilst from tower to tower runs an openwork indented gallery of great beauty. In the centre of each gallery rises a small turret. The gothic doorway is also large and remarkable; and of the huge angel above it, I like everything except the head.

It is the interior of the Lonja which I would bring before you, consisting of a single square chamber of great size and height. The arched roof is supported by fluted pillars, the most slender and graceful imaginable. From these spring the mouldings which gradually form the arches, and spread upwards and outwards like a palm tree. But whilst these exquisite stone representations have remained, the palm trees for which Palma was once famous have nearly all disappeared.

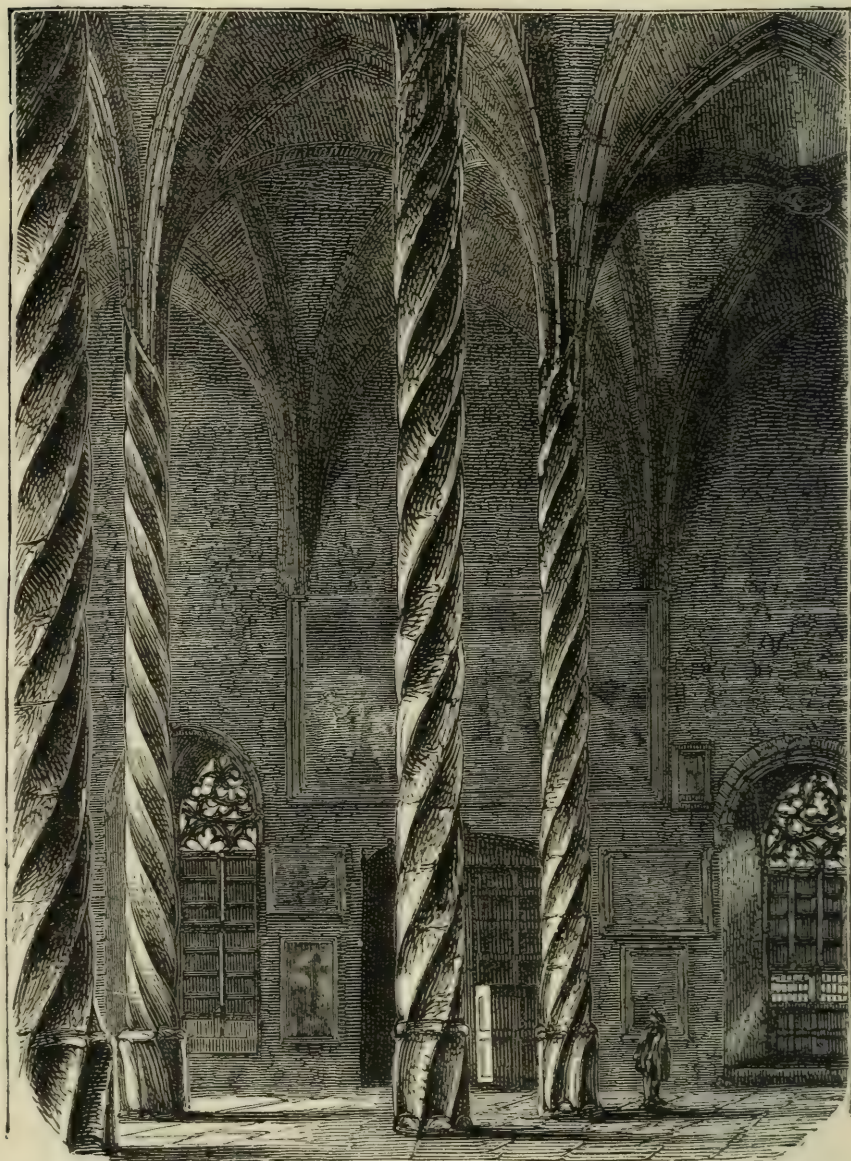
The place is now empty and disused. At the present moment it is in the hands of restorers and workmen. The large windows are shuttered, but the gothic tracery above the shutters, admitting a gloomy religious light, is of the most refined beauty. The sky seen through them is liquid, blue and ethereal. Lights and shadows play about the roof, throwing out the pillars in relief, or veiling them in half obscurity.

For years, I am told, it has been used as a ball-room, and for public meetings; and lighted up, the effect must be singular and charming. The pictures, usually hanging on the walls, are to-day on the ground. The place looks dismantled. Workmen are chipping stone and planing wood. The marble floor on which we walk is earthy, the atmosphere we breathe is tomb-like. All this does not matter. It cannot blind one to beauty and refinement in architecture. The Lonja is the exact opposite to the Cathedral, for whilst that is severe almost to nudity, this has great beauty of detail. I can quite understand many tastes preferring the Lonja to the great church. But comparisons, after all, are idle, very often misplaced, nearly always invidious. All people and things cannot be alike—Heaven forbid; each should be judged alone.

This building was intended for an exchange: and I suppose fulfilled its destiny for many an age. But one asks involuntarily what sort of men they were who transacted business amidst these columns, under this vaulted roof, and what effect it had upon their lives and their work. Surely they must have been of finer mould, nobler in mind, more upright in dealing than those who went through sale and barter within prosier walls? A thing of beauty is a joy for ever, and in constant presence of the beautiful, we impressionable beings may soar superior to the dead level of everyday life. For the tendency of time and existence, experience and contemplation, mixing with one's fellow

men and weighing them in the balance, is I fear, seldom in favour of making us rise "on stepping stones of our dead selves to higher things."

These Palma merchants in their beautiful Lonja, were very much

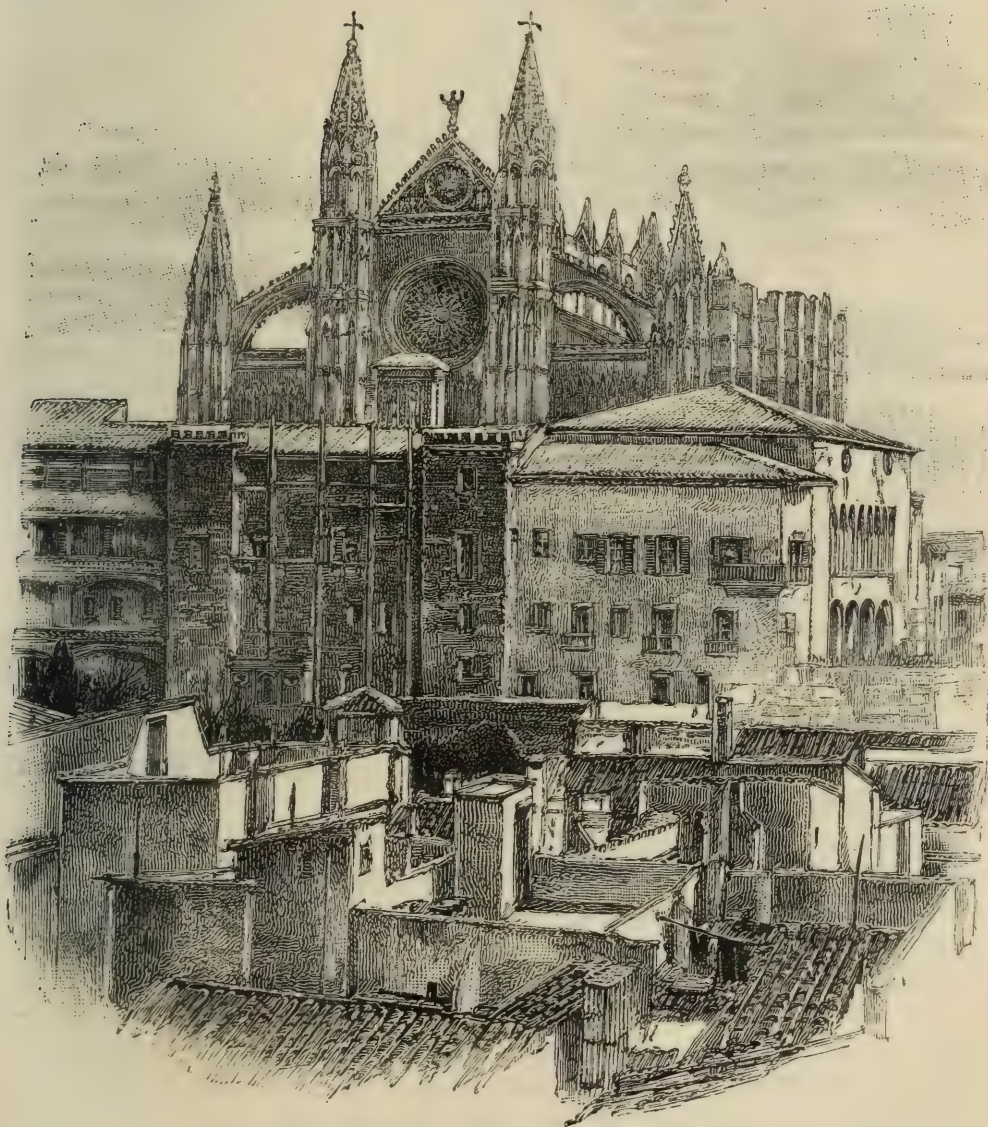


THE LONJA.

to be envied in those past days. They have left behind them a tradition and an atmosphere. One peoples the great square hall with their dead-and-gone shades, but it is impossible to make of them anything prosy or austere, or invest them with the hard, unromantic front and bearing of ordinary business mortals.

We mount one of the towers of the Lonja, and reach the battle-

mented roof. The view is more remarkable, more striking than from the hotel. We are nearer the everchanging, sapphire sea, and hear its ceaseless plash upon the shore : a sleepy sound suggestive of the Mallorcan temperament. The harbour is at our feet, all its craft



VIEW FROM ROOF OF THE LONJA

dancing upon the flashing water. Below us are innumerable houses, with white walls, balconies, arcades and red-tiled roofs. Beyond them, the wonderfully picturesque old Moorish Palace raises its head proudly. It is very ancient, is irregularly built, and what it has of Moorish perhaps is best seen from here. Its arcades and gallery facing the sea are very characteristic.

Above and beyond this towers the Cathedral, its amber tone standing out in strong contrast with everything around it, an object of infinite grandeur. H. C. has sketched it from this point of view, and I enclose you the result.

But it is amazingly hot up here. We seem to have got ever so many thousand miles nearer the sun than we were down below. Yet that sun is beginning to decline. Presently it sinks and disappears; night follows. So does our Palma purgatory in the dining-room. So does our excellent witch's brew: the cup that cheers but not inebriates.

Then we stroll out under the night sky. We go down the street, and up the steps, and pass under the shadow of the great Cathedral to the fortifications bordering the sea. It is intensely dark, and I, who with so strong a sight by day have suffered from night-blindness from childhood upwards, can see nothing before me. It delights H. C. to lead me astray: for I am at his mercy. Now he has nearly plunged me over a precipice, and now I have almost knocked down a sentry, muffled up in a cloak as if it were so many degrees below freezing point. I apologize, and he excuses himself for having been in my path. These are delightful manners. From his bearing you would think he considered that in attempting to knock him down I had paid him a compliment or done him great honour. H. C. is amused in quite a boyish way, expands with suppressed laughter (I cannot for the life of me see anything funny in the situation), and suggests in a sort of Job's-comfortor-tone that before long I shall find myself in the hands of the Inquisitorial Council.

The night is glorious; the ramparts are deserted; we and the sentry have the whole extent to ourselves. Stars flash and blaze. One has no conception of such a firmament in England. But I need not describe it to you, who have seen it in softer climes than that of Great Britain.

The sea is stretched out before us, invisible, yet ever sounding. Here and there, a light upon its bosom shows some fishing craft at work. That poor wreck is within a few yards of us. We feel its influence though we cannot see it. Never again will it show port and starboard lights, or answer to its helm.

Beside us the great Cathedral is outlined, darker than the darkness of the night; looking many times larger than in broad day; a black, overwhelming, mysterious mass. We gaze and gaze until a creepy feeling takes hold of us. We feel *molecules* beside it; atoms under all this expanse of sea and sky and starry world and eternity of space. It gives one a breathless, bewildered, *lost* sensation. Whither does the soul, when summoned, wing its flight?

Below us an incline leading to mysterious archways admits one into the narrow streets of the town; streets peopled with the shades of many of the dead-and-gone nobility of Palma. Nothing else haunts them to-night, except here and there a flitting figure: a woman hurrying home, it may be, to complete the simple annals of

her daily life : or a cavalier, cloaked and muffled, shivering with what he considers a freezing atmosphere, and we a balmy, beautiful air.

If we wait long enough, we shall assuredly hear the old watchman with his melancholy cry, see the gleam of his lantern mysteriously flashing about the archway, into which he ventures for a moment, and then turns back again. As I have already said, he reminds one of many things : and hearing him I seem to hear again Mendelssohn's grand setting to the words : "Sleepers wake ! a voice is calling : it is the watchman on the walls."

But here, it is we who are on the walls ; the watchman is down below ; and he recedes, and his voice dies away. And the night goes back to that intense quiet which gives one a feeling of such profound loneliness. You seem face to face with death and eternity : you realise the fathomless mystery, the awful certainty of both. To some, a savour of life unto life : and to others—what ?

All this we went through to-night ; for more often than not, these fortifications are our evening stroll. Everything about it has the strange fascination of utter stillness and solitude, of great surroundings and grand outlines, the wide sweep of a wonderful sky. As for the town itself, it puts up its shutters, and metaphorically or actually goes to bed very early. The dark streets and closed houses are depressing and melancholy. We prefer the silent ramparts.

Then we come in, and H. C., after sitting for half an hour like a graven image or a deaf-mute, suddenly glows with the light of inspiration, pens a Couplet to Capella, or an Ode to Orion, inflicts his composition upon me, and then magnanimously retires to solitude and slumber. I am left alone ; but it is not the most unpleasant hour of my day—or night—that in which I hold uninterrupted converse with you, and let my pen take its wandering course.

And, as I live—there again, is the old watchman, cloaked, lanterned, heavy-shod, heavy-limbed, announcing the small hours. And there is the dawn in the East, and I must hasten away like a ghost at cock-crow.

Benediction rest upon you : and on the thrice sacred head who makes our sunshine in this world, and has unfailingly pointed the way to the next.



AMONG UNTRODDEN WAYS.

IN central France the explorer may still find such solitudes that the footsteps of a stranger awaken a kind of panic in the life of hills and woods.

Visiting the streams of the upper Loire a few years ago on a holiday trip, I had travelled for some hours since leaving the last beaten track, leading my bicycle when the ground undulated too much. Hot and tired, I hailed with no little pleasure the inviting shade of a deep valley. I had come upon it suddenly and unexpectedly, so hidden away was it in that sea of hills.

As I descended into its cool shade, leaving my bicycle above, the rabbits stood perfectly still and looked at me: the birds hesitated long enough for me to have caught them before they understood that flight was necessary.

It was a delicious spot, an ideal Eden, and it was spring-time; and I, in my spring, fairly revelled in the scent of the hyacinths and the lily of the valley, and the starry primroses on the soft green banks spread like a golden carpet mingling their own subtle perfume with that of the hyacinths and lilies. What a contrast it all was to the smoky town I had escaped from for a brief holiday, and the grim office of the lawyer, for whom I had the privilege of copying deeds.

I was seized with a mad desire to build myself a hut in this dale and quietly retire beyond human ken and following, to dream the dreams that were plentiful enough in me at that time, without any musty parchment to bring me down from the clouds, or a green-baize door to shut me in with the stern matter-of-fact of the law. This idea came as a suggestion merely, to smile over, but it took greater possession of me at each moment as I wandered on down, down into the dale.

There was a merry little stream at the bottom curvetting over a shallow sand-bank, and losing itself among the trees at a turn of the valley. How cool and sparkling it was. I was about to remove my boots and stockings and behave like a child at the sea-side, when my eyes suddenly fell upon a mound which seemed to be artificial. It was shaped like a grave, and was on the opposite side of the stream. I walked through the water, boots and all. I was always curious, and a trifle impatient.

A moment brought me to it, and I felt much as Robinson Crusoe must have done when he came upon the footprint on the sand. Upon this mound, which I could no longer doubt was a grave, lay a wreath of fresh-gathered flowers. I stared at them till the blue of the hyacinth blended with the gold of the primrose and produced a prismatic effect. I closed my eyes and looked again. There could

be no doubt of it. There was the wreath; so fresh and dewy, it could not have been placed there many hours. It was woven with grasses upon a willow stem. I would have touched it, but it seemed profanation; and as I stood there the wooded hills on either hand echoed such bird song as I had never dreamed of. I felt as if I had come into an enchanted land, and longed, yet feared to awake from my delusion.

My delusion deepened upon me; for now, amid the shrill music of the myriad birds, I heard a joyous human soprano rising and falling in an exquisite song that harmonised with the laughter of the stream, the gentle music of the rustling leaves and the bird chorus.

My delusion deepened still further, for now I seemed to see my bicycle descending the valley, with my valise strapped to it, and the glinting sunlight striking on it brightly now and then. But as I gazed in a sort of stupefaction, my delusion reached its climax. That bicycle was being led by what must have been the nymph of these woods, to whom the soprano voice seemed to belong. She was dressed in green, which accounted for my not seeing her sooner, so did her robe blend with the nature-tints about her.

The words of the song reached me now. They were in French. It was no delusion, then, but a reality. Victor Hugo's poem, "*Le Papillon et la Fleur*," had never so touched me as when sung by this fresh young voice.

Whether I connected that gay creature with the grave by which I was standing or not I cannot tell. A feeling of awe, akin to the supernatural, had possession of me. Had I known that the earth was going to open, I should still have stood by that grave watching her.

Softly and lightly she trod the valley, her twinkling white feet seeming scarcely to bend the blades of grass. And between the wild snatches of her song, she laughed a laugh which the silver stream must have taught her, and stopped to touch my bicycle here and there, as a child might some new toy. Finally, she laid it against a bank, and throwing herself at full length upon the soft turf, she gazed at it, and burst into song once more. And all this time I stood beside the grave with the fresh wreath upon it, drinking in this vision of beauty.

She could not be more than sixteen, and her short dress made her look even younger. How soft and mellow was the brown of her hair which streamed on the turf and over her bare arms. Hair so cared for, so well-kept in this solitary place, that it seemed to me there must yet be another here. And how exquisitely white and pink were the little feet in the shadows. The bodice of her simple dress was a kind of pelerine crossed upon her breast and knotted behind, and round her white throat she wore a string of coral beads.

I had time to note all this before she rose from the grass and began to experiment with her new toy. She had evidently no idea of its

use, for at length with a gesture of impatience she turned from it, and her eyes fell upon me.

There could be no reason in it, but I felt like a criminal. What right had I to be watching her so without her knowledge? She had held me spell-bound ; she also released me. For, with a cry of terror, much like some animal might give who has seen his comrade struck down by a gun and knows it is pointed at him, she flung her white arms into the air, and fell violently forward.

I rushed through the stream, when she had thus restored my power of motion, and was instantly at her side raising her, and chafing the little hands, which I now saw were tanned and freckled, but of exquisite form and mould. But the face ! Had ever wood-nymph such a face ? Who and what could she be ? The proud upper-lip spoke of a long and noble line of ancestors ? The lines of her face, the poise of her head upon those graceful shoulders, all spoke her of noble descent. Yet this strange garb, what could it mean ?

The eyes remained closed. I ran to the stream and filled my hat with water, with which I sprinkled her face. She had sung in French ; I now addressed her in that language.

She first smiled, and then opened her eyes. Oh, those eyes, to be thus looked into at so small a distance and in such a lonely spot—soft, velvety, melting brown. But as the sweet eyes revealed themselves, the smile died, and a look of proud enquiry took its place, and she asked me how I came to be there, as a princess might rebuke an unbidden intruder on the royal presence.

I explained, as well as I could, that I was wandering about the country on my bicycle, leading a gipsy life for the sake of variety, nearing the towns or villages only when my provisions failed, and I had come quite by chance upon this lovely valley.

She raised herself and leaned upon the bank, looking at me critically. Then her ripe lips smiled and a sunny ripple overspread her features, and she spoke.

“Are you a prince ?” she said in French. “In my book princes come so to find their princesses. I feared mine would never come. You must be my prince, and are come to marry me—isn’t it so ?”

I had but one sense alive as this exquisite creature spoke : it was silent admiration. She waited for no reply ; but, pointing to my bicycle, said : “Is that magic ?” And then leaning forward to look at me more closely, her rich smile inundating me with a wild joy I had never known till then, she added : “But, *mon prince*, you must not take me to the great world till my father shall return, and, alas, he is very long.”

“What need of going to the great world at all, my princess ?” I cried, taking one of the little hands, and feeling my pulses beat in a wild transport at this new contact.

She looked at her hand, held within both mine, and then lifting her eyes to mine, in sweet childish confidence, said : “But in my book

the prince always takes the princess to court, and I so much want to see the great world."

Innocent as was her every glance, her every word and gesture, how could she know that her words thrilled me as words had never done before? I pointed to the grave.

"My mother lies there," she said simply. "She must be happy in this valley; don't you think so? And she had seen the world. I was born here when she came from Russia. Where is Russia? Is it really so very far away?"

I had never been there, and told her so; and she looked disappointed. But the cloud rested only a moment, and seemed ill-at-home on her glad young face; and, like the child she was, she passed from one subject to another in rapid succession.

"If you do not know about Russia, at least you know about somewhere else," she said. "Come; my dinner is ready; we will eat it together, and you will tell me about the world, and I will show you my book."

More in an enchanted land than ever we crossed the stream—she with her bare feet; and by and by we came upon a wooden cot, painted green, and skillfully hidden away among the dense trees at the turn of the valley. The picturesque little dwelling reminded me a little of something I had seen in Norway. There were three small rooms opening into one another; the middle one being the living room, the other two the bedrooms of the father and daughter. The windows were like small doorways and had no other screen against wind and weather than a wooden shutter on hinges, which placed the little house in darkness when the elements were unpropitious. It struck me as odd that the builder of this pretty cot should have borne such an inconvenience. My little wood-nymph explained it by saying with an air of mystery:

"We have a lamp, you know—such a beautiful thing, bought in the great world—have you seen one? but you must have seen them, for," with a sigh, "you have come from the world. My father was afraid some one would see the light if we had windows of glass, and that I should forget to close the shutter; but who is there to see the light? When my father is away I sometimes light the lamp and put it in the valley, and the rabbits sit round and look at it. See!" she cried, "there is my good hedgehog at the door."

But I did not look at that spiny creature, for I had caught sight of a terrible pair of eyes gazing fixedly at me, and with evil intent, out of one of the door-windows. I heard at the same time a low but fierce growl.

"What an enormous dog!" I said, hesitating, as I now saw him place himself ominously in the doorway.

"Oh, Jacobin is my good friend," said the young girl, with one of her enchanting smiles; and she tried to induce him to let me enter, which, however, he showed no sign of doing, but stood his ground

determinedly. My sweet hostess thought of a device, however, which changed his whole demeanour, for he gave a sulky wag of his tail equal to the bow of a man in society who is introduced against his will.

She put one of her soft bare arms about my neck, as a sister might have done to a brother, and, reaching up, approached her red lips to my cheek and kissed me, explaining that so she did to her father; and Jacobin would know me for a friend.

I began to feel that in spite of the unknown father, who was probably a conspirator, from his being in hiding, and from his having such a name for his dog, office-stool might see me no more. I began to be amused in thinking I should be advertised for, not by my relations, for I had none but the lawyer to whom my guardian had bound me. That gentleman would not make frantic efforts to find me, however, as he himself would come into my little property in case of my death.

Now we entered the cottage together. What a Robinson Crusoe place it was. The number of ingenious contrivances told of the difficulty of bringing anything here from the towns. Nothing had been brought that by any ingenuity could be made on the spot.

There was a fire of wood and turf, and a wood-pigeon was in process of cooking. Jacobin had brought it in, the girl explained; and then she showed me a gun, almost sorrowfully, saying: "Sometimes I have to shoot, when there is nothing else; but I go on to the moor, for how can I shoot my friends in the valley? But," she added, the little cloud leaving her expressive face, "there are many good herbs in the valley, and fruits too, and berries when the year falls, and one lives well here—very well."

I added something to the meal from my own little store of "camping-out" material, and our repast was a very gay one.

When the room was put to rights, Amie—for she told me she was so called—showed me her great treasure, her one book. It was a very old and worn edition of fairy tales, printed in French. When she had turned over the pages and pointed out her favourite stories, she said with innocent mirth:

"And my prince is come too, and will marry me."

I only smiled back at her in answer. The dreamy state in which the valley itself seemed to have thrown me, and the witchery of this exquisite child of nature, lulled me into a placid quiescence in which all that followed appeared natural. Amie placed her father's room at my disposal when night came. I did not tell her I should not avail myself of it, but when she had fired me once more by her pure good-night kiss, and Jacobin had stretched his huge form across her doorway, I passed out into the cool air, and in a rapturous intoxication, unknown even to the opium eater, I paced the yielding turf the whole night through, and watched the stars glint down through the tall tree-tops. The nightingales had now filled the orchestra, and

the night was as full of melody as the day had been. And the stream rippled over the stones—and I dreamed.

Away up the valley lay my polished bicycle, with the heavy dew descending copiously upon it unheeded. It ought to have been carrying me miles away—perhaps so. Let the man who has been placed in a like position say what I ought to have done; but do not let him say he would have done it. But my experience could never come to another man. I was singled out.

In a delirium of happiness, I resolved that the foreigner's cold steel alone should separate me from my sweet princess who had graciously claimed me as her own. I little knew how soon I was to be put to the test.

II.

IN the early dawn I made a careful toilet, for I had with me all requisites to suit my bohemian holiday, except a change of clothes. The night dews had saturated my tweed suit—I must trust to the fresh morning breeze to dry them. There are conditions when, the mind being paramount, the body is impervious to cold or wet. I was in such a condition on this morning, and felt neither damp nor want of sleep. I mounted to the moorland above, and saw the sun rise, and wondered if I went away, and came back, whether I should find my enchanted valley vanished. But even while I thus pondered, I saw the faint smoke curling above the trees from my wood-nymph's fire. Ah! I might have known she would rise with the birds.

I descended the valley, and found her filling her little kettle at the spring. Upon her streaming hair, which had a natural ripple of its own, there shone and glittered still the record of the cool water which must have recently known her sweet contact.

At sight of me she set down her kettle, and greeted me as "Mon prince" (this was always her name for me), with all her singular charm of innocence and grace.

In the afternoon I improvised a hammock for Amie, with my Scotch plaid hung between two trees. She swayed herself to and fro in it, delighted, her little white feet crossed, and her round arms thrown behind her head, and the birds swung on the twigs above her, no blither than she.

Lying thus, I stretched upon the green bank beside her, she told me her own history. She had little enough to tell. Happy is the nation that has no history, happier still the woman who has none. She had lost her mother when six years old. Her father had cared for her with the tenderest solicitude. It was not until she had grown tall and strong that he had left her with Jacobin for weeks together, and he always performed these evidently forced journeys with real regret. Still Amie feared nothing. She had nothing to fear, she

said. Her education went no further than reading her fairy-tales, and her writing was but a sorry performance.

One evening, after sunset, she and I paced the valley together, whilst she begged for stories of the great world, which was to her what the moon and stars are to other children. I thought and thought, but there was so little that had not the trail of the serpent upon it. Nothing seemed fit for her pure ears. My silence caused her to find a new object of interest.

"Your hair is short," she said, "and you have no beard like my father." I told her I had shaved at the stream that morning. She then gleefully announced her intention of seeing me perform that novel operation on the morrow. Then, with a critical look at my hair, she pronounced me, "*Bien comme ça !*" and meditatively taking one of her own bright tresses in her hand, seemed considering an imitation.

"No," said I, answering her thought, "you must not cut it, except"—and I was cruel enough to try a worldly artifice—"except you cut a tress for me to remember you by when I go back to the world."

She instantly freed herself from my side, and standing erect and palpitating before me, seemed to wait for her grief to gather strength. Then flinging herself into my arms she sobbed upon my breast, and shed such passionate tears as I had never witnessed. "Ah," cried she, raising her pathetic, tear-stained face to gaze at me, "the prince, the true prince, never leaves his princess ; then you can be no prince. But"—and her manner grew proud and determined, and love and devotion lit her too-glorious eyes—"if you go, then I shall follow you, as Jacobin would follow me."

She laid her head once more upon my breast, weeping. It was delicious to be so cared for, and I let her weep for some moments before I kissed away her tears and told her that only death should part us.

After this, several days passed—such days that even the gloom which followed was brightened by their memory.

I was lying in my hammock one night when a colder breeze sprang up, and the trees bent and swayed and moaned. I thought I heard the sound of thunder. A vivid flush of lightning nearly blinded me. I rose up in my hammock and listened. A terrible peal rang through the wood. Another and another peal, and the birds began to twitter, and the echoes repeated themselves in the hills ; and now there was a crashing sound of heavy rain upon the leaves. Down it came in torrents, and the lightning played almost continuously and the thunder kept up an incessant roar. I have never in my life seen such a storm. The wind tore down the valley, and the trees on which my hammock hung bent nearly to the ground. My bed was now as watery as the lark's proverbially is. I descended the valley, the little stream was flowing noisily, and the driving wind in this narrow gulley flung me hither and thither like a reed. I made my

way with difficulty towards the cottage. Jacobin was howling dismally. Amie was standing at the open door, the wind and rain beating mercilessly upon her. She was starting to come to me, she said, to beg me to take shelter. I entered, drenched to the skin, and breathless from the heavy gusts of wind. Even as I entered, the wind tore up the valley more furiously than ever, and wrenching one of the shutters from its catch, banged it backwards and forwards on its hinges till it broke away, and the storm burst relentlessly into the little sitting-room. It was for that reason that we passed into Amie's little chamber. Her lamp was lit, and we sat hand in hand, silent, as the hurricane raged. The uproar caused by the raging wind and furious rain and clashing torrent made it almost impossible to hear each other speak. It also covered the entrance of a stranger.

There, without warning, framed in the doorway stood a man of about fifty; his eyes resembled the dog's, but they were even more terrible. He wore a beard, and his mouth was hidden by a heavy moustache. From the broad-brimmed hat he wore, the water streamed upon his shoulders, and his long coat had been torn apart in the storm.

His eyes and mine were fixed on one another; nevertheless I saw his hand, so boney and hairy, clutching at the handle of something that projected from his pocket. Could it be steel? It was.

With a cool precision he balanced that terrible weapon and steadily advanced upon me. He sought no explanation. He gave none. The storm raged even more fiercely; the cottage shook violently. The lamp upon the table shuddered and fell. The flames began to rise. The beloved book was the first to catch fire. Nobody spoke, or the storm rendered the voices inaudible. Amie clung to me with a grip her frail form seemed incapable of. The dog howled ominously. There was a loud crash close upon us, and the rain and wind poured into the room. The shutter had gone like its fellow. All was darkness but for the liquid flame falling from the wooden table to the ground.

I took a sudden resolution. Amie was clinging to my neck. Madly I leaped through the aperture the shutter had left, carrying her with me. I fled through the storm like part of itself, my lovely burden flung across my shoulder. As I fled, glancing behind, I beheld in the lightning's gleam my pursuer. I rushed through the stream that was now wild and turbid, and sped upward between the trees. The ground flew beneath my feet. I gained the moorland above. Which direction should I now take? All were equally open to the gaze of my pursuer. Could I, burdened as I was, hope to outstrip him? Was I using up the strength which would presently be needed? I had not to decide the question. A perfect hurricane of wind swerved round, from what direction I could not tell, but it uprooted trees, and they fell crashing down the valley. It threw me violently to the ground. "Oh, my Amie, we are lost," I cried. She spoke no

word. On came the foreigner. I tried to rise, but found it impossible; my ankle was badly sprained. The next flash of lightning revealed my enemy advancing upon me. It also revealed us to him.

Amie flung herself across my body. Love can speak without words. Her act said "I will die for you."

"Not that!" I cried, and I put her from me. Her father—for I could not doubt it was he—now stood above us.

He commanded me in French to rise to my feet. I expressed my inability, and cried wrathfully: "Would you kill me like a dog?"

"Ah my fine gentleman," said he, "it is now that you find your tongue," and I heard his voice between the thunder-claps, and saw his awful face in the lightning flashes.

"Parbleu, but you did not count the cost! You tracked my dove; but tell me, who shall track you? who shall seek you here."

"Your child," said I, with all the energy of desperation, "is what I found her: the sweetest, purest thing the sun shines on."

"Or the storm beats on," added he, ironically. "Then the purest thing the sun shines on may enter paradise to-night."

The fresh voice of my darling here made music in the tumult.

"It is well, mon prince bien-aimé, we are not to be separated."

The cold steel descended. I had but just flung Amie from me again, when that noble dog, who knew how dear I was to his mistress, covered me with his body, and received the wound intended for me, licking my face.

It was intensely dark, and so near had I come to death, I had lost the power of speech.

Again that terrible knife descended. This time it passed through my arm. I felt no pain, I only knew it, and swooned.

I must have been left for dead; for the next thing I knew was that the sun was pouring down its rays upon the drenched earth, stained red with my blood, and that noble animal, with a gash above his shoulder, had torn away my sleeve from the wound and was licking it.

Towards evening I crawled into the valley, and put my lips to the water like the dog, who had dragged himself painfully at my side. I bathed his wound, and that night he and I lay on the ruins of the little cottage; for all the interior was reduced to ashes. I lost all count of time, but the sun rose and set again, and I tottered to my feet. Jacobin tried to follow me, but rolled over on his side. Once more I fetched water from the stream in my hat, which had remained on my head from its close-fitting shape. But the poor animal was past all help. He licked my hand, and died.

I reverently buried him, using the tools of my would-be murderer. Then I said farewell to the enchanted valley, to devote each hour of freedom from work to a search for my love—my love whose very name was unknown to me.

Her father would be kind to her, that was some comfort. Well I knew that his threat to her was empty.

III.

PURSuing my sad and apparently hopeless search for my princess, when recurring holidays freed me for a time from the practice of the law, I found myself in Paris, a few years later, at Easter. Hope still dwelt in me, for that Amie lived I felt convinced; and surely in such a love as ours there must be a magnetism which sooner or later would draw our divided lives together.

At that time all Paris was talking of "Théodora," and one evening, finding myself near the Porte St. Martin Theatre, I entered, taking such a seat as remained at that hour. I paid but little attention to the play, but, closing my eyes, listened to the soft music of Sarah Bernhardt's voice. Those gentle tones recalled another voice to me.

It was after the scene where Marcellus chose death rather than betray his fellow-conspirators, that a young Frenchman near me remarked to his companion:

"But they are droll people, these conspirators—they hate and are hated, they love and are loved. *Ma foi!* one would do well to be a conspirator, to be wept for by such eyes as those of sweet Belinski."

"Does she still go to her father's grave?" asked the other.

I began to listen intently.

"Sans doute—it is every day you will see her with her *bonne* at Père la Chaise."

"When she marries, all that will cease."

"Marries, did you say? You do not know, then, that she has refused half Paris?"

"Is it a prince, then, that Mademoiselle awaits?"

This sarcastically.

"Ah, yes!" I said within myself; "and the prince has come with the kiss that is to awaken the sweet princess!" My pulses beat wildly. Then came a shadow of fear. This might not be Amie.

The Emperor Justinian and Théodora were now in the Royal 'loge,' and the awful scene, though different, recalled that night when she and I had been torn asunder—but I, unlike Andréas, lived; then why not Amie also?

Need I say that next morning I was early at Père la Chaise. I stood on the rising ground near the tomb of Béranger, where I could take a survey of the whole. How long the time seemed! Yet before twelve I saw a girl of about twenty, dressed in black, carrying fresh spring flowers in her hands, and beside her was a *bonne* who seemed to be trying to cheer her.

That first day when I had seen her I was standing by her mother's grave. I was hat in hand beside her father's as she approached it now, with eyes cast down. Oh, how glorious is beauty when pathos shadows it! How did I note each change in the dear features? She

placed her flowers upon the grave, and then I saw the bright tears slowly travel down the fair cheeks.

"Ah, do not cry, mon enfant! Some day, when you have a husband and children, you will be happy," said the *bonne*, encouragingly.

"My husband is in another land," she said, still looking down.

Oh, that voice! how it stirred my very soul. I moved towards her and held out my hands.

"Oh, my princess," I cried passionately, "not in another land, but here, here to claim you."

With a cry she threw herself upon my breast, fainting.

Since then, Amie and I have together visited the enchanted valley. There were still the ruins of the *Châlet*. There was the grave with the withered wreath upon it, and the grass had thrown a green coverlet over poor Jacobin. Fragments of my hammock still fluttered on the trees. But the past, with its dark horror, was gone; and only the present, the present full of bliss, remained.

JEANIE GWYNNE BETTANY.



BY AND BY.

WAYWARD soul, ah, wherefore grieving?

Look on high;

Wintry clouds are surely leaving;

Soon beneath a sunny sky

Nature shall awake to gladness,

Birds resume their merry madness,

There will be no room for sadness

By and by.

See you not, with cheerful presage,

Spring is nigh—

Read you not her loving message,

In the daisy's golden eye?

Though the words be all unspoken

Take we now the gracious token,

Grief's dominion shall be broken

By and by.

Ah, the bravest heart would often

Faint and die,

Were it not that hope may soften

Disappointment's bitter cry.

For the longest life of sorrow,

If one mighty Aid we borrow,

Yet shall have a happy morrow

By and by.

SYDNEY GREY.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER V.

BEATRICE WARD.

HIGH up in a top bed-room in the Miltons' house, Beatrice Ward was rising and dressing, eager to begin her first day of London life.

Her waking thoughts were of the old cottage in the country, shut up and empty now, and of the apple-blossoms drifting over the grassy garden-walks, and the swallows darting hither and thither in the sunshine. Tears were running down her cheeks, as this picture of the old home rose vividly before her eyes ; but she controlled herself, and steadily resolved to carry a cheerful face downstairs to the kind woman who had given her a home. And then came second thoughts ; the tears were dried ; the vision of the little cottage faded, and she murmured half aloud :

“I wonder whether I shall see him to-day ?”

Mrs. Milton was a lady by birth and education, and she had trained Beatrice in her own simple and somewhat old-fashioned way. From childhood to girlhood she had attended her in her daily walks ; taking care that her frocks were properly lengthened ; and told her what was right and what was wrong for young girls to do. And it must be confessed that when her former pupil was handed out of the cab by a strange young man, the worthy woman had felt a little thrill of surprise and dismay. It might not be really improper, but it looked so ; and she took the first opportunity of questioning Beatrice about her travelling-companion. Wifehood had made very few changes in Mrs. Milton. Once a governess, she was always a governess, prepared with her neat little lectures on correct behaviour, and as ready as ever to administer mild rebukes to her charge.

Beatrice had given a fairly satisfactory account of her acquaintance with Godwin Earle, but she could not bring herself to tell the whole story of that first meeting on the railway line. She was not used to concealments, and her tale was, perhaps, a little awkwardly told. In fact, if she had been severely cross-examined later on, it is doubtful whether she could have clearly repeated the explanation which had been extracted from her by Mrs. Milton. She felt that it was quite right of her old governess to ask questions under the circumstances, and she had tried to answer them without having recourse to any fibs. And the long and short of it all was, that Mrs. Milton had received a vague impression that Beatrice had been seized with

sudden faintness as she was crossing the Silverdean fields ; that she had been found, half insensible, by Mr. Earle ; that he had helped her to reach the railway station, and had then taken care of her on the journey.

All through the night the kind-hearted woman had worried herself about the girl's state of health, and had made up her mind to call in a doctor at once if there was the slightest return of that terrible faintness. It was a great relief to see Beatrice coming downstairs in her neat black gown, with a fresh, morning face, and eyes that showed only the very faintest traces of tears.

"I hope you have slept well, my dear?" said Mrs. Milton, anxiously. "Yes ; I see you look rested. I always detect the traces of wakeful nights at a glance. Now come and have breakfast without a moment's delay. I have been thinking a great deal about that fainting-fit of yours, and I believe I have found out the cause."

"Oh, it wasn't at all a bad fainting-fit," replied Beatrice, with a slight colour rising to her cheeks. "And indeed it didn't last long."

"You don't know how long it lasted—how could you know, when that young man discovered you lying on the grass in a state of insensibility? It makes me shudder when I picture the scene, Beatrice!"

"Then please don't picture it, dear!"

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Milton, loading her pupil's plate with good things. "It is my duty to try and realise any adventure in which you are concerned. And I must caution you, Beatrice, against the foolish practice of going out early in the morning without a substantial breakfast. You fainted because you had not taken enough nourishment to sustain your frame. It is well for you that Providence interfered on your behalf, or the consequences of your folly might have been very serious."

"I did feel rather weak and spent when we arrived at the railway-station," admitted Beatrice, busy with ham and eggs. "Mr. Earle got a cup of tea for me at a cottage."

"Very kind and sensible of him. But, my child, you must not go about the world accepting cups of tea from young men. I am not pleased, by any means, at this unconventional beginning of an acquaintance."

"But, Harriet, I couldn't help it." Miss Ward always addressed her ex-governess by her Christian name. "And he is a thorough gentleman ; you could see that, I'm sure."

"He *looks* a thorough gentleman. But, Beatrice, child, you have yet to learn how much a man may have lost before he loses external refinement. It is the last thing that leaves him."

"If you are going to talk in this depressing strain, Harriet, you will utterly spoil my breakfast," said the girl in an aggrieved tone. "Why have we to come to the conclusion that Mr. Earle has nothing but his external refinement to recommend him? Why is it necessary always to believe the worst of people at once?"

"Not necessary to believe the worst, only to be prepared for the worst, Beatrice."

"I don't see much difference between the two things. If you are prepared for anything, of course you are expecting it. But that's just your way, Harriet; when we were going for a long walk you always armed yourself with an umbrella, and distrusted the clearest of skies."

"It was true wisdom, my dear. Even if I did not use the umbrella, it was a comfort to know that it was ready for use."

"It wasn't a comfort, it was a nuisance. A precaution is always a nuisance, I believe. And if we have to go through life suspecting a swindler in every new acquaintance, I, for one, shall be very glad when the time comes for me to seek a better sphere."

"Beatrice, dear, for shame! A young girl must be contented with life as it is, and take it patiently."

"I can't be contented with the kind of life that you describe," declared the girl, with a little shake of her sunny head.

"Do you know, my dear Harriet, I sympathise with Beatrice!" The remark came from Mr. Milton, who had finished his breakfast, and was just ready to be off to the city. "I confess I don't like to see young people over-cautious, although you are right—as you always are—in putting them upon their guard. Now about this young man who travelled with her; a sort of instinct tells me that he is perfectly to be trusted. I can't account for this instinct in the least; and yet it would be impossible for anyone to reason it away."

"What a dear man Mr. Milton is," thought Beatrice, and her blue eyes flashed him a swift glance of gratitude. He carefully buttoned his gloves, kissed his wife, and took his departure.

"My husband is the most confiding creature in the world," said Mrs. Milton, with a sigh. "He trusts everybody in the sweetest childlike way, and gets abominably imposed upon."

"Harriet, I am sure he is perfectly delightful!"

"My dear, he is simply an angel." Mrs. Milton spoke in a solemn tone. "But what he would do without me, heaven only knows! Let me see; I believe I never told you how we came to live in Wimpole Street. Soon after we were married, my husband's uncle died and left him the lease of this house and all the furniture. The lease has still twenty years to run, and it seemed to me that we had better come here and let part of the house, which is infinitely too large for us, than stop in our cottage at Shepherd's Bush. I delight in managing a large house, and I always hated a small one. Richard opposed the plan at first, but he is quite contented now."

"And the plan has answered," said Beatrice. "I am not surprised at your success. My grandfather always declared that you had a genius for managing an establishment. But I am glad you keep this charming room for yourselves."

The Miltons' sitting-room was on the dining-room floor, at the back

of the house. A French window opened upon a paved yard, which Harriet's taste and skill had converted into a sort of flower-garden. Just now it was looking its best with fresh greenery and a bright show of geraniums; and there was a gay flower-stand inside the room. The scarlet and gold of the blossoms toned well with the rich brown of the walls and the soft red and russet hues of the couch and carpet. Everything was comfortable; everything was refined. There were goodly rows of books ranged on the shelves, and a pretty piano occupied one corner.

"You must see the whole house by-and-bye," said Mrs. Milton, pleased with her approval. "But at present the rooms are quite full; the ladies in the drawing-room will stay to the end of the season, and we have a permanent lodger on the second floor. By the way, Beatrice, you are sure to be interested in Mr. Vordenberg; he looks just like some one in a tragedy or a poem."

"And he is the second floor lodger?"

"Yes; he was one of the first who came to us. One can't decide on his age, but I don't think he can be old, although his hair is perfectly white. He has a beautiful, melancholy face, always very pale, with chiselled features and fine dark eyes; and he plays and sings divinely."

"What a delightful person to have in the house! Do you get at all friendly with him?"

"Not exactly friendly. It would not be wise, for many reasons, to be too intimate with our lodgers. Besides, there is something impenetrably reserved about Mr. Vordenberg; he is always courteous and gentle, but you can never get very near to him."

"Vordenberg is rather a romantic name. It isn't English."

"I believe he is an Austrian. But I myself have heard him talk, apparently with equal fluency, in English, French, German and Italian. Sometimes he has foreign visitors; they are always men, and rather shabby-looking men, too."

"Did you know anything of him before he came here?" Beatrice inquired.

"My dear, we always learn something of people before we receive them. It was our doctor who recommended Mr. Vordenberg to come to us. He is the most pleasant of lodgers, regular in all his habits and simple in all his tastes; but we know no more about him now than we knew when he first arrived. Sometimes, in the evening, when I pass his door, I hear him singing some plaintive air that brings tears into my eyes, and I feel persuaded that he is a man of many sorrows. But what those sorrows are, I cannot even guess."

"And the other lodgers," said Beatrice; "are they interesting, too?"

"Not in the least. They are ordinary women, well connected, and with some money to spend, who have come up to town to go

through the season in the orthodox way. In the dining-room there is a widow and her young daughter; in the drawing-room there are two sisters, one married and one single; they are just the kind of people who may be met anywhere."

Beatrice had finished her breakfast, and was feeling all the irrepresible buoyancy of health and youth. The excitement and fatigue of yesterday had passed away; even the sorrow of her loss seemed to be fading softly into the far past; and yet she knew that often in some quiet hour the old country home would rise before her eyes again. But the whole world seemed new to-day; the sunshine was waiting for her out of doors; the shops were splendid with early summer fashions, and the streets gay with well-dressed people. She would not have been the natural, healthy girl that she was if she had not wanted instantly to go out and enjoy herself.

"Dear Harriet," she said, suddenly kissing her old governess: "I hope you won't think me very hard and unfeeling because I'm in good spirits this morning!"

"Why should I think such things of you, child?" Mrs. Milton dearly loved her pupil, and she rather liked Beatrice to call her "Harriet;" it made her feel young.

"Well, because some people would blame me, I suppose, for taking an interest in the life that is going on around me. They would say that I ought not to forget why I am wearing this," touching her black gown. "And indeed I don't forget; I never shall cease to remember *him*. But I am young, Harriet, and I had rather a dreary time at Silverdean after you left us."

Her lips, full and soft, were quivering like the lips of a sorrowful child; and there was in fact a good deal of the child left in Beatrice Ward. A far harder woman than Mrs. Milton would have been moved at the sight of that wistful face.

"My dear," she said, taking Beatrice's hand between her own, "it is the greatest relief to me to find that your spirit is not crushed by grief and by the lonely life that you have led. It was not the right life for a girl to live; it might have made you a gloomy and morbid woman. You don't know how often I have longed to take you away from that melancholy old cottage and bring you here into the heart of the world. It is a wicked world, my dear, as the parsons always tell us; but I think the people who live out of it are generally as bad or rather worse than those who live in it."

"Why, Harriet!" Beatrice was laughing, although tears were ready to fall. "I didn't expect to hear such remarks from you. I thought you would be prosing every day about rustic delights and rural innocence, and weeping over the iniquities of life in town."

"There is enough to weep over. But as to rustic delights, Beatrice—can I ever forget rustic selfishness and rural narrowness of mind, to say nothing of the bumptiousness which makes country folk so difficult to deal with? However, we won't waste a lovely morning

in this kind of talk. I have arranged all my household matters, and if you are willing, we will start at once for the Royal Academy."

"Oh, I'm so glad we are to go there!" Beatrice gave a sigh of infinite satisfaction, and then turned to leave the room and ran lightly upstairs. A jaded young lady, chancing to open her door, looked rather enviously at the fresh face as it flitted past, and thought that the girl in black must certainly be new to the fashionable world.

Meanwhile, the girl in black had speedily gained her own room, and was arranging her simple dress, putting on her little bonnet and smoothing the wavy gold of her hair with that natural contentment which comes to a pretty girl at a looking-glass. The bonnet was new, and she was wearing it for the first time. It had been chosen by Mrs. Milton, and had waited in the wardrobe for her arrival. Beatrice fastened the black bow under her dimpled chin, and told herself that she decidedly approved of Harriet's choice. Truly, there is nothing like black for setting off a cream-tinted skin and bright hair; and Miss Ward went downstairs again with the happy consciousness of looking her very best.

"You have improved, Beatrice," said Mrs. Milton, with grave decision. "Yes, you have improved very much. As a child you were a little sallow, but I never despaired of you, even at your worst. Besides, I know that pink-and-white complexions are seldom to be depended upon, and I always hoped that you would take the ivory tinge. Really, I am very much pleased with you."

They went out together into the sunlight, and before they had gone many yards, Beatrice had forgotten her new bonnet, and even her improved complexion, and was wondering whether Mr. Earle might chance to stroll into Burlington House. She listened absently to her companion's talk, and saw Godwin in every well-dressed man who crossed her path. How had he begun this bright new day? Would the old despair seize him once more in its cruel grasp? She felt that her heart could never be quite at rest until she had met him again, face to face, and assured herself that he was reconciled to the common lot of humanity.

But when she found herself among the pictures, her eyes and mind were so fully occupied that she ceased to watch for Godwin Earle. With all her heart, and in her own simple fashion, she thoroughly enjoyed the show, and gazed her fill, regardless of the sneers of amateur critics: often just enough, perhaps, but ill-timed and not too well expressed. Mrs. Milton was a capital guide, pointing out the most noteworthy works unobtrusively, and lingering as long as her pupil pleased over anything that struck her fancy. The rooms were very full, but the hour was early still, and the great rush and crush would come later on.

Beatrice had paused, spell-bound, before a certain picture, hung on the line; and her companion watched her face as she stood and looked, her soul in her deep-blue eyes, a slight colour tinging her

cheeks. The artist had chosen no new subject—there was a leaden sky, a waste of snow, and a band of Polish exiles on their way to Siberia—but he had told the bitter story well. And surely, in all the world's great chronicle of crimes there is no darker page than the tale of Russia's dealings with Poland. It was a page that Beatrice, in her lonely country home, had studied intently, with all the passionate indignation of a warm-hearted woman. And here was a scene, which her fancy had often pictured, presented at last to her bodily sight.

Turning round suddenly to speak to Mrs. Milton, she found that a stranger had taken her friend's place and was standing close by her side. A tall, thin man, with an indescribable stateliness of look and bearing, was gazing earnestly at the picture, taking in every detail as if he were printing the whole upon his memory, and yet never moving a muscle of his grand, calm face. It was a face that might itself have served admirably for a painter's study : so clearly and finely moulded, so marble-white, so proud in its melancholy beauty. The silvery hair formed a striking contrast to the dark eyes which still shone with the fire of youth ; the eyebrows were dark too, and the full beard was only slightly grey. Beatrice, fascinated, and almost startled, could not help looking at him, and noting that absorbed gaze of his. At that moment a hand touched her lightly on the arm.

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Milton's voice on the other side of her. She followed her chaperon at once, and in another second or two they had moved away from the spot. Not until several groups were between them and the bearded man, did Mrs. Milton venture to speak without restraint, and even then she cast a timid glance behind her.

"Oh, Beatrice," she began, "how you were staring at Mr. Vordenberg ! I don't think he noticed you, and I am sure I hope not. What could have possessed you, child ?"

"Was *that* Mr. Vordenberg ? It was very wrong of me to stare at him, Harriet," replied Beatrice, quite penitently. "But I could not help it ; his face fascinated me ; he is so sad and splendid."

"Sad and splendid ! Yes ; those two words describe him exactly. But I do hope, Beatrice, you will get used to the sadness and splendour, and not look at him when you meet him on the stairs. I daresay you will often see him ; his rooms are under yours, you know."

"I'll shut my eyes when I hear him coming. I'll do anything rather than misbehave myself ; and yet, Harriet, I must get another view of him somehow. I never saw anybody look so romantic in all my life."

"Well, you haven't seen much in all your life. However, he is remarkable, I admit. But Richard and I are quite sure that he does not want to attract notice ; it is evident that he likes to lead the quietest of lives."

"He is a man with a history ; I am certain of it," said Beatrice.

"I am not certain of it," Mrs. Milton rejoined. "I have seen expressive faces allied to empty heads, and impassive faces masking hot hearts. Mr. Vordenberg may have led only a commonplace life after all."

Beatrice shook her head.

"No, Harriet, you won't persuade me that there's anything commonplace about him. But in future I will not betray my interest in this wonderful lodger of yours so openly. Now let us forget him, if we can, and look at some more pictures."

It was not, however, very easy to forget Mr. Vordenberg; and just as they were preparing to leave the exhibition, Beatrice expressed a wish to take another glance at the Polish exiles. They stepped back into the room where this picture was hung; and there, still standing before it in rapt contemplation, was the man with the long beard and silver hair.

"He must mean to buy it," said Mrs. Milton, when they were fairly outside Burlington House; "and I hope he will not, for it is a melancholy thing to hang on one's wall. But I don't think he is rich, and that picture would cost a large sum."

When Beatrice was alone in her own room, the face of Vordenberg was still before her eyes, sad and impenetrably calm; and to a bright girl, living in her own youthful world, there was something wonderful in that deep tranquillity. She tried to fancy all that he had seen and done before that look of peace had fixed itself on his features. What deserts had he crossed, what mountains had he climbed, to gain the resting-place that he had won at last?

She had tasted sorrow: her father's death in India had suddenly stripped her young life of all its gay hopes and pretty fancies. The quiet years with the old grandfather in the cottage had made her acquainted with other forms of grief; she had sympathised with her neighbours and helped them in their needs; but all those griefs and needs had been of a very simple and common kind. Vordenberg's suffering had lifted him up to the heights that she had never climbed, and, perhaps, never could climb.

The sight of that face of his had given her a hint of what a life may be if it is tried by such cleansing fires as few of us pass through. He must, she thought, have had all selfishness and frivolity burned out of him, and there was nothing left now but that grand, ineffable peace.

"But if the prize is great it has to be won by a terrible ordeal," thought Beatrice, with a thrill of fear. "I hope it will not be my lot to bear any of those great troubles; I have no longing for the martyr's crown. It seems very mean of me to think these thoughts, but I am only a commonplace young woman, and all I want is a little common happiness."

She did not realise, poor child, that even this same common happiness is not such an easy thing to get as it seems to be. Our

everyday joy of loving and being beloved is set about so thickly with thorns, that the hand which would gather it can hardly escape a wound.

But Beatrice was not right in calling herself a commonplace young woman. She had stronger lights and deeper shades in her character than commonplace people ever have. When she looked at a fine picture, or read a noble poem, her face would be lit up with spiritual beauty; certain strains of music interpreted the language of her heart; certain aspects of earth and sky would send her thoughts travelling into a glorious dreamland.

As yet, however, the world was a very new world to her, and only her right instinct guided her to the true. By-and-bye the false would present itself in its most attractive guise, but it had not reached her yet. She looked at everyone with confiding eyes that had never seen behind a fair mask, nor caught a glimpse of a cloven foot under a velvet slipper. All the bitter knowledge of life was still to come.

After a little while she left off thinking of Vordenberg and began to recall the pictures that had pleased her best. She hoped Harriet would take her to see them a second time; or, it would be better still, if Mr. Earle would be her companion. But this idea was so wild that her cheeks grew hot when it came into her head, and she tried to drive it away.

Beatrice spent a part of the afternoon in unpacking her belongings and arranging them in the wardrobe and drawers. Her room was quite large enough to hold everything that she possessed, and there was space for a small table and a comfortable arm-chair. That chair, soft and pillowy, invited her to rest; the afternoon sun was shining in upon the walls, filling the whole chamber with golden light, and enfolding her in a dreamy brightness that suggested repose. Her mind was still full of the pictures, and her eyes were tired with sight-seeing; but it was a pleasant sort of weariness that was creeping over her fast. Sleep came on her unawares; her head sank gently back upon the chair, and she drifted away, then and there, into a very tranquil dreamland.

She woke gently, without any startling return of consciousness; and yet it seemed as if the music heard in dreams had followed her into the everyday world. The door was open, and someone in the rooms below was singing and playing on the piano; singing an unknown air, with a strange, subdued passion that thrilled her, and almost moved her to tears. Parting, pain unutterable, and hope that rose free and triumphant from the crushing weight of a mighty sorrow—all this, and more, was expressed in that wonderful song.

Beatrice rose, her breast heaving, her cheeks flushed, and went out on the landing to listen. Then someone came running quickly upstairs; the music suddenly stopped; a door closed; and she was turning back, disappointed, to her room, when Mrs. Milton's voice called her.

(To be continued.)

ON THE SHORE.

BEYOND those sunset bars of gold,
 Which light the waves of the purple sea,
 Near the crystal river, the pearly gate,
 know you are watching and waiting for me.

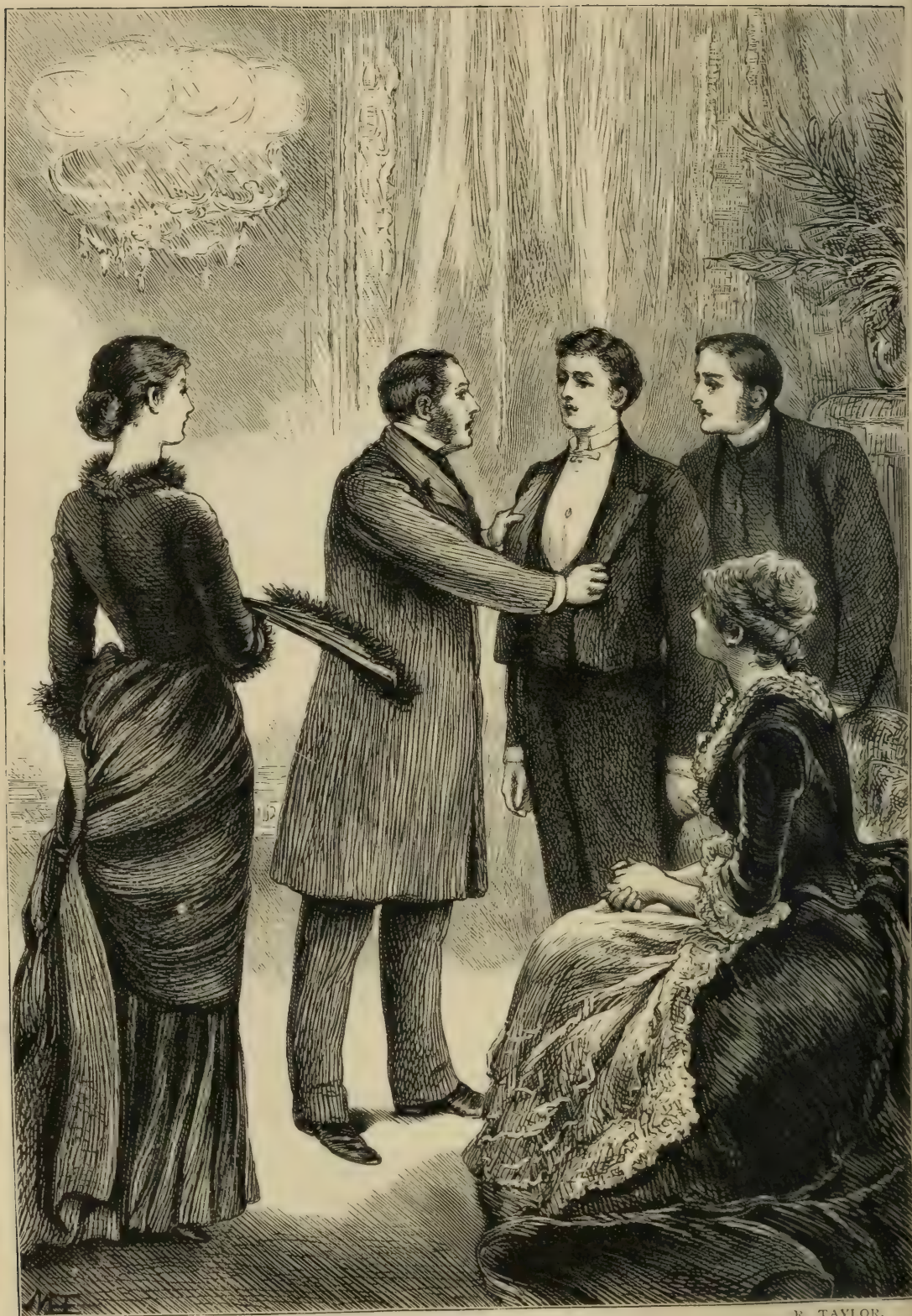
Not weary, not fearful, for Time with you
 Is never measured by lingering years,
 And the golden points on the dial's face
 Are numbered by smiles, and not by tears.

To-night as I walk on the lonely shore,
 And list to the mournful surge's beat,
 I think of the music that falls on your ear,
 Of the beautiful blossoms that lie at your feet.

And 'tis joy to know that no grief of mine
 Can darken a brow so bright and fair ;
 Yet I sometimes fancy my spirit can feel
 A gleam from the glorious radiance there.

A boat will lie shortly on yonder wave,
 The Boatman be drawing towards the shore :
 His call of warning I soon shall hear,
 And the soft, low splash of His ready oar.

He will bear me safely, His arm is strong,
 Till the walls of the golden gate I see ;
 And when I reach it your task is done,
 There is no more watching and waiting for me.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"IT IS A WONDERFUL LIKENESS, IS IT NOT, LADY GRACE?" WENT ON THE SURGEON.

THE ARGOSY.

APRIL, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VII.

WITH SIR WILLIAM CHANT.

IN the handsome drawing-room of their town residence in Berkeley Square, sat the Dean of Denham and Lady Grace Baumgarten. It was a fine evening in April; the dinner-hour was approaching, and they were awaiting a guest: an old friend whom the Dean had met in the street unexpectedly that day, and invited.

Years have elapsed, and the Dean, approaching fifty now, is more portly than he was wont to be; but Lady Grace carries her age well, and looks not a day older than the period a woman never confesses to having passed—five-and-thirty. But in the Dean's face there is a look of anxious care: what can the flourishing Dean of Denham have to trouble *him*?

A great deal more than the world at large suspected. Gifted with an aristocratic wife, and she with aristocratic tastes and habits, the Dean had fallen long and long ago into a more expensive rate of living than his means permitted. Embarrassment followed, as a necessary consequence; trifling enough at first, and easily put off—not done away with, but deferred. But the plan does not answer; it is something like the nails in the horse-shoe, which doubled as they went on; and Dr. Baumgarten had now attained to a height of perplexity in his pecuniary affairs, not frequently reached by a dignitary of the Church.

Half the labour of his later life had been to hide it from Lady Grace, and he had in a great measure succeeded. She could not avoid knowing that they were in debt, but she had no conception to what extent, and debt is rather a fashionable complaint. She also found that the Dean invariably ran short of ready money; but that is not uncommon either.

In one sense of the word, the debts which had gathered about them might be put down to the score of Lady Grace. At the death

of her mother, Lady Avon, she had come in to all the property that would be hers—two thousand a year. With that and the Dean's income, they might have lived sufficiently well. But Lady Grace had little idea of the value of money, and was given to thinking that one pound would go as far as four or five. Living in Berkeley Square was her doing, and was quite wrong and ridiculous with their narrowed means.

It had come about in this way. Two years before the present chapter opens, Lady Grace had come to London on a visit to her brother. Lord Avon had never married, and spent much of his time abroad, keeping his house—a small one—in Piccadilly done up in brown holland and lavender. However, he took possession of it for a season, invited his sister to stay with him, and the Dean, if he could come. A season in town was perfectly delightful to Lady Grace.

"I shall not be able to do without it, now that I have tasted its sweets again," she said to her brother one day. "I think I must look out for some furnished house to be had cheaply, Henry, and take it."

"All right," said his lordship, who had given in to Grace from the time she was a baby.

Lady Grace found a charming house in Berkeley Square. "Just the thing," she observed to her brother and to the Dean, who was in town for a week. "It is only a little house, and may be had on almost one's own terms: may be rented yearly, furnished; or we may purchase the lease and the furniture as it stands. Of course, the latter is out of the question, but we might hire it. It belonged to an old lady who is now dead."

"We cannot possibly afford it," whispered the Dean aside to Lord Avon. "Pray don't encourage Grace to think of it."

"What's that you are saying, Ryle?" cried his wife. "Not afford it! Oh, but we must; we will afford it. I'll economise in other matters."

Lord Avon generously came to the rescue. He purchased the lease, which had twelve years to run, he bought the furniture, and made a present of it to his sister.

So there was no rent to pay in Berkeley Square, and this was the second year they had been in it.

But the money went all too quickly in other ways. What with the household they kept up, the entertainments Lady Grace liked to give, and the expenses of the children, Dr. Baumgarten's income ought to have been doubled.

Gertrude had her governess—a French lady, who spoke and taught the three languages equally well: French, English, German. *Mais-moiselle* Léon was a most desirable individual, and a finished instructress; but these exceptional governesses have to be paid according to their merits. Gertrude's masters were also expensive.

Charles was at Oxford; and though not especially extravagant, he

did not live as a hermit. It all takes money. Cyras? What of Cyras?

Cyras had given trouble. Was it likely to be otherwise? It had always been the Dean's intention that Cyras should follow his own calling, the Church. Cyras knew this, but had not objected, although never intending to fall in with it. Make a parson of him! Dress him up in a black coat and a white choker! the youngster was wont to say behind the Dean's back. No! He'd rather go in for the clownship at Astley's; rather be a jockey at Newmarket; rather hew timber in the backwoods of America; rather perch himself on a three-legged stool at a dark desk in a city office—yes, even that. None of the fellows who went in for those things need have a conscience; but a parson must have one; so he'd leave the Church to those who liked consciences.

This treason was reported to the Dean, and he ordered Cyras before him, and administered a stern rebuke. But he could make no impression upon him. Cyras argued the matter out; he was not insolent, but he was persistent; he had not grown less independently reckless with his advancing years. Reckless, that is to say, of other people's opinions when they clashed with his own. Though, in spite of the Dean's reproaches to the contrary, the objection to enter the Church proved Cyras not to be so totally devoid of thought as his father assured him he was. Cyras was eighteen then, and was to have gone to college in the autumn.

"It won't be of any use my going to Oxford, papa," the handsome young fellow urged. "To send me there would be waste of time and money. I have quite as much learning as I shall ever want. Make Charley into a parson instead of me; it won't go against *his* conscience."

"You know, Cyras, that Charles has set his heart upon the bar."

"And a very good calling too," rejoined Cyras, equably. "You are in the Church yourself, papa—one of its shining lights, you know; but that's no reason why you should force a son into it."

"What is to become of you, Cyras?"

"Of me?—oh, anything. What I wanted was to have a commission bought for me in the army, but——"

"I have explained to you that I could not afford it," interrupted the Dean, with some agitation, for it brought before him the vexatious state of his finances. "Would you wish to remain a burden upon me, Cyras? Do you expect me to keep you for ever?"

"Not a bit of it, father," said Cyras, heartily. "I'd rather make money myself, and keep *you*."

The Dean could hardly forbear a smile.

"How would you make it?" he asked.

"Oh, go out to the gold diggings and dig it up—something or other of that sort."

"Don't talk recklessly," reproved the Dean.

"As I could not have a commission bought, I don't much care what I do," Cyrus was beginning : but Dr. Baumgarten laid his hand upon his arm.

"Cyras, I have told you the truth," he said, with emotion. "I had not the purchase-money, neither could I have made you the necessary yearly allowance. My boy, you little know how hard up I am, and how claims press upon me daily. Sometimes I think the trouble will be too much for me."

"I'm sure I will not add to it," cried Cyrus, in his good-natured, careless way. "I shall get along first-rate, father, you'll see."

"If you would only enter the Church, Cyrus, I could take care of your preferment ; you'd be provided for for life. Don't bring up that nonsense to me again about conscience. I should be deeply grieved to think that a son of mine could have aught of sin upon his conscience to unfit him for entering upon a sacred calling."

"Oh, it's not that," said Cyrus, lightly. "I wouldn't mind taking Orders to-morrow, but a parson must lead so straitlaced a life—at least, if he is what a parson ought to be—and I couldn't do that, you know. I couldn't, indeed, father. I should be turning Roman Catholic, or something of that sort, to get rid of my gown—Methodist parson, perhaps."

The Dean sighed. It seemed a hopeless case.

"I will talk with you again, Cyrus," he said ; "but I do fear you are going to be another source of trouble and expense to me."

The opportunity for further talk did not come. Cyrus disappeared from home ; and the next heard of him was that he was on board ship, sailing for New Zealand. His letter to the Dean, despatched by the pilot who had conveyed the ship down Channel, was characteristic of him.

"MY DEAR FATHER,—Here I am, on board the good ship *Rising Star*, a clipper, A 1, bound for Wellington. I know you think me careless and indifferent, and all the rest of it, but you may believe me when I say that I would not willingly bring trouble on you for all the world. I know I shall get on over there. They'll give me a place at once in Brice's shipping house. I'm sure of that, if I choose to take it—I've spoken to Brice here, and he says so ; but I may, perhaps, find my way to Melbourne instead, and try my luck at the gold-fields. I don't mean to be any more expense at all to you ; I hope I shan't be, and I've shipped as a common sailor before the mast to work my way out, rather than ask you for the passage money. I daresay you'd not have given it me if I had asked ; you'd have forbidden me to go, and I thought the safest way was to say nothing about it. So I chiselled a young sailor fellow out of his papers—he had broken his leg, and must lie up for a year to come—and I went down to the office, rigged out in a glazed hat and pea-jacket, stood there as bold as any sailor among them, and signed articles for the

Rising Star. She is fourteen hundred tons burthen. I'll write again when we reach Wellington ; or, if I don't like the look of things out there, I'll come back in the ship. And with best love to you, dear papa, and to mamma, and Charley, and Gertrude,

"I am your affectionate son,

"CYRAS."

Cyras did not come back in the ship. The Dean transmitted him some money to Wellington, and Cyras sent it back again. He sent with it a loving letter of thanks, telling his father that he was getting enough to keep him, and did not want money. After that they heard from him at intervals, from Australia or from New Zealand as the case might be. According to his own account, he was always flourishing, and he once sent a lovely gold bracelet to Gertrude, and a twenty-pound note to Charley.

Three years had elapsed since his first departure, and now Cyras was back again. Not to remain, he told them ; only to see them and the old country once more. Charles—I think this has been said—was keeping his terms at Oxford, and the Dean and his wife were living in Berkeley Square. Cyras seemed to have brought over plenty of money. He had settled down as clerk in a shipping house at Wellington—Brice and Jansen—and had got six months' leave from it. He was twenty-one now, and but little changed—gay, rattling, reckless in speech as of old ; but exceedingly handsome, exceedingly like what the Dean had been before him. Only in one point did he not resemble his father, and that was in stature : the Dean was tall and stately, Cyras was but little above middle height, and very slight.

"And what have you been doing with yourself to-day, Cyras?" enquired the Dean of his son, who was singing to himself in an undertone, as he stood at the window looking out on the square. "I wanted you this morning, but you were not to be found."

"I went to Norwood to see Aunt Charlotte," replied Cyras. "She took me into the Crystal Palace ; we lunched there."

"Oh, indeed. How is she?"

"Flourishing," said Cyras. "She fired off no end of questions at me about the Brices of Wellington."

"Naturally," remarked the Dean. "Her husband and Brice of Wellington are brothers."

"Are the Brices of Wellington nice people, Cyras?" asked Lady Grace.

"The nicest people going, mamma."

"And well off?"

"They just are. Why Brice and Jansen is about the first shipping firm in Wellington."

The reader may not have forgotten that Charlotte Dane, sister to poor Edith, married a Mr. George Brice of London, with whom she

had become acquainted when he was visiting his uncle, Brice the surgeon at Great Whitton. It was this Aunt Charlotte Cyras had been to see. She lived in a handsome house at Norwood, for they had become very wealthy.

And whilst he was speaking, Brice the surgeon came in ; for he was the guest expected. After greeting Lady Grace and the Dean, he turned to Cyras, holding him before him by the lappets of his coat, gazing intently into his face. He had not seen Cyras for three years.

"What a likeness !—what a likeness ! It is yourself over again," he said to the Dean. "Just what your face was at his age."

Dr. Baumgarten laughed. "You did not know me when I was his age, Brice. Nor for five or six years after it."

"It is a wonderful likeness, is it not, Lady Grace?" went on the surgeon.

"I have always said so," she answered.

Gertrude entered ; a beautiful girl, with the fair delicate skin and the proud blue eyes of her mother. She was a pleasant girl, not self-willed as Grace used to be, but sweet and gentle.

"How is Lord Avon?" asked the surgeon.

"Quite well," said Grace ; "and in London. He was on the Continent all last year, but this year he is at home."

"As good natured as ever, I expect."

"Just the same," laughed Lady Grace.

They sat, after dinner, in the drawing-room talking together until nine o'clock, when Mr. Brice had to leave them. He was engaged to a gathering at a noted physician's house near Hanover Square: a dozen or so of learned men, chiefly medical men, were about to meet to discuss a discovery of the day.

"I wish you would accompany me," said the doctor to his host. "You could not fail to appreciate what you will hear, and I'm sure you will not repent the introduction to Sir William Chant. He has hardly his equal."

"I should like to go very well," said Dr. Baumgarten.

"Any room for me?" spoke Cyras quaintly.

"To be sure," assented Mr. Brice. "Come along."

This visit need not have been recorded but for a matter which grew out of it. They spent a pleasant and profitable hour or two at Sir William Chant's, the Dean especially enjoying the society of Sir William himself, to whom he took a great liking ; and they came away soon after eleven o'clock. In passing a side street, they suddenly fell upon a commotion ; wild shouts arose from the mob, while flames were pouring out of the windows of one of the houses. Cyras made for the scene at a gallop ; the surgeon ran ; Dr. Baumgarten went after them. There was much pushing in the street, everyone wanting to get where he could best stare at the windows. In the midst of it all an engine, with its firemen, clashed and dashed round the corner, scattering the people right and left.

Cyras bethought himself that his father and the old doctor might not be quite so able to battle with a mob as he, and he looked about for them. A minute's search and he came upon his father on a doorstep. The Dean had apparently sat down, and was lying back as if he had no life in him.

"Father!" exclaimed Cyras. "Father!"

Looking closely, Cyras saw that the face was very pale, and that a blue tinge seemed to be drawn in a circlet round the mouth. The Dean gasped once or twice and opened his eyes.

"Have you been hurt, father? Are you ill?"

Dr. Baumgarten rose up, with the help of Cyras. "No," said he; "no, I have not been hurt. It is a fainting-fit that I have now and then; not often."

"A fainting fit!" repeated Cyras, wondering what a tall, fine, strong man, like the Dean, could have to do with fainting-fits.

"It's something of the sort. My breath seems to leave me suddenly; I have to fight for it; and then a faintness comes on," added the Dean, as he walked away, upon the arm of Cyras.

Cyras had picked up odds and ends of notions on his travels. "I suppose the heart's all right, father?" he said.

"Oh dear yes," replied Dr. Baumgarten. "What with Denham and Great Whitton and private matters, I think I'm a little over-worked. Sometimes I feel as though I wanted rest; that's all, Cyras."

"I should take rest," observed Cyras.

"That's easier said than done, my boy."

"Look here, father: put the Deanery and the other places out to nurse for a few months, and come over with me to New Zealand, when I go back again. It would set you up for the rest of your life; you'd come back stronger than any parson in the Denham diocese."

"Hush!" said the Dean, hastily withdrawing his arm from that of Cyras. "There's Brice."

Mr. Brice, having extricated himself from the crowd, was standing at the end of this quiet street, looking out for them.

"It's a bad fire," he remarked, unsuspiciously, "but we can do no good, and are best away from the fray. And now I'll wish you good-night; for my road lies that way, and yours this."

"You are sure you will not be able to come to us again in Berkeley Square?" said the Dean, as their hands met and clasped.

"Can't," said Mr. Brice. "I'm promised to-morrow morning to George and Charlotte at Norwood, and I go down home in the evening. It has been a great thing, my getting this little bit of a holiday. You'll remember to deliver my messages to my nephew and the rest, Cyras, when you get back to Wellington?"

"I'll remember them, sir."

"Father," began Cyras, the following morning, when, as chance

had it, they were alone for a few minutes after breakfast: "don't you think it might be as well if you saw a doctor?"

It was exactly what the Dean *had* been thinking. But he did not acknowledge it.

"Oh, I don't know," he answered in a careless tone.

"I should just have told old Brice right out last night," said Cyrus.

"One can't very well talk of things in the street," returned the Dean.

Dr. Baumgarten went out a little before one o'clock, on his way to Sir William Chant's. He thought it a good time to catch him: he would probably have about got rid of his morning patients. An idea had struck him that he would rather tell his tale of doubtful sickness to Sir William, a stranger, than to a medical man who knew him better. Such a fancy penetrates to many of us.

Sir William would be disengaged in a few minutes, the servant said; he was then with his last patient. Dr. Baumgarten handed the man his card—"The Dean of Denham"—but desired that it should not be given in until his master was alone.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Dean; very pleased that you should have called upon me," was Sir William's warm greeting when his stately visitor was ushered in.

"What shall you say if I tell you that I have come as a patient?" returned the Dean.

"I hope not."

"Yes, it is so. That is—I have—have—I have experienced a little annoyance once or twice, which perhaps it may be as well to speak of," rapidly continued the Dean, getting over his momentary hesitation. "It amounts to nothing, I daresay."

"You do not look as if much were amiss with you, sir," smiled Sir William. "Will you take this chair?"

The chair he touched was the patients' chair, facing the light. Sir William sat opposite to it in the shade.

"Before I enter upon the matter, Sir William," said the Dean as he took the seat, "I must get you to make me a promise. It is a very simple request, and I am sure that you will deal openly with me. If you find reason to suspect that there is anything radically wrong, will you candidly avow it to me?"

"I wonder what it is?" thought Sir William. "*Something*, I am sure. Do you suspect any particular mischief yourself?" he inquired.

"Well, I suppose I ought to do so."

"The heart?" queried Sir William.

"That, if anything. Possibly it may arise only from my being somewhat overdone with work and other matters. I have been attacked at times rather curiously."

"Will you describe the attacks?"

"There is not much to describe," said the Dean. "A sudden

stoppage of the heart, accompanied by a strange inward fluttering, which I feel to my fingers' ends ; and then a faintness ; almost, but not quite, amounting to a fainting-fit."

Sir William Chant put another question or two as to symptoms, and then passed on to another phase.

"How frequently do you have these attacks?"

"Very seldom indeed. I've only had about half-a-dozen in all. The first time was after boating, when I was an undergraduate at Oxford ; the last time was yesterday evening ; and that covers a good many years, you perceive."

"Yesterday evening!" repeated the doctor, struck with the remark.

"Not when you were here?"

"No ; afterwards. In going home we got into a crowd collected at a fire. I ran, and otherwise exerted myself, and the attack came on."

"And sometimes, I expect, it has come on from mental emotion?"

"Yes ; more frequently so. What do you make of it, Sir William?"

Sir William Chant smiled, rose, and took some instrument from a drawer in his table. "You must let me test your organs a little before I can give you an answer."

"Beginning with the heart, I suppose?" observed the Dean, as he unbuttoned his clerical coat and waistcoat.

"Beginning with it and ending with it, I fancy," thought the physician ; but he did not say so.

The examination, a slight one, was over. The instrument was in its keeping-place again, the clerical coat and waistcoat had been refastened, and the gentlemen sat, each in his chair, facing one another as before.

"Well?" said the Dean, for Sir William did not speak.

"Yes, undoubtedly the seat of mischief lies in the heart. It is not quite as sound as it ought to be."

"Am I in danger? I must beg of you to tell me the truth," added the Dean, finding he was not immediately answered.

"My dear Mr. Dean, in one sense of the word you are in danger ; all people must be in danger whose heart is in the condition of yours ; but the extent of the peril depends very much upon yourself."

"You mean that with tranquillity it may be reduced to a minimum?"

"I do. With perfect tranquillity maintained of mind and of body, your heart may serve you for years and years to come."

"I may not be able to command that."

"But you must do so. My dear sir, *you must*. I do not know which would be the worse for you, worry of mind or undue exertion of body."

"He would be a clever man who is able to ensure himself a life exempt from worry," remarked the Dean.

"I mean emotional worry ; worry that runs to agitation," said Sir

William. "Of small worries we all have enough and to spare ; life is full of them. Even these I would have you meet calmly."

"If I can."

"Some matters will not admit of an 'if,' Dr. Baumgarten; must not be allowed to do so. Every individual has so much under his control. And—I think I may understand that with each attack you have had, you were able to trace it to some emotion or other. Is that not so?"

"It is so."

"Well, then, what more need of argument? Keep emotion from you and you will not have the attacks."

"On the other hand—I think I am to understand that should any undue agitation arise, despite every precaution, to induce an attack, it might be fatal? My life may pass away in it?"

"Yes. But you must not allow it to arise."

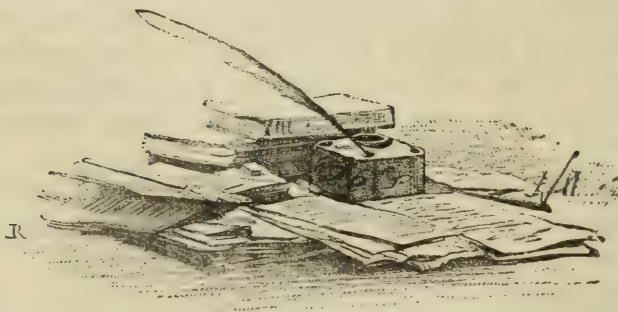
With a few quiet words of thanks, Dr. Baumgarten arose ; he put his fingers into his waistcoat pocket.

"No, no, no; no fee from you, Dr. Baumgarten," spoke the physician, warmly. "You were my honoured guest last night; let me have the pleasure of regarding our interview to-day as one of friendship. And be sure to come to me whenever you want advice of any kind."

"So be it, Sir William ; and I thank you greatly," answered the Dean, as their hands met.

He walked slowly along the street on his return to Berkeley Square, deep in thought, unable to put away an impression which had taken hold of him—that for him the dread fiat had gone forth. It seemed as sure as though he heard the death-bell tolling for him in his coffin.

(To be continued.)



In Loving Remembrance.

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

Died, February 10th, 1887.

SHE could not wait until the earth was drest
In flush of blossom and in cowslip gold ;
A voice was calling to her—"Come and rest :
In our fair Land we know not heat nor cold."
Her spirit hearkened to the high behest ;
The work was ended, and the tale was told.

How was it told—that story of a life ?
Faithfully, bravely, tenderly and well ;
Firm friend, sweet mother, true and loving wife ;
No bitter murmurs from her kind lips fell ;
Still, through the discord of our common strife,
Her soft tone echoes like a silver bell.

How slow to blame, and oh, how swift to bless !
How patient through our changing loves and hates,
How gentle in the time of heart-distress,
And calm in all the war of wild debates !
We, who have loved her, know her loveliness,
And lo ! the angels praise her at the Gates.

Good-bye, dear friend, until the Day shall break—
The Golden Day that bids the shadows flee,
Sweeter than dawn of spring, when daisies take
The dewy light that shines o'er vale and lea :
We, who are weary now, shall sleep, and wake
To a fresh life, and find ourselves with thee.

SARAH DOUDNEY.

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

In Memoriam.

THE pen may well fall from the hand in attempting its task, though only a few pages can be given to this present record. If a longer Biography should be written, it must come when Time has softened the first keenness of the blow; though the loss, the sorrow, the silence, and the vacant chair can only grow more real and more vivid in the coming years.

But it is meet that a few words, whatever the effort, should be given at once in memory of one whose name has been so long a household word in the pages of this magazine, and has contributed so greatly to its remarkable success.

It is not only a painful but a difficult task to write the following pages. To describe the personal charm of Mrs. Henry Wood is almost as impossible and hopeless as it would be to attempt to embody the perfume of the rose, or to give form and expression to the scent of the violet.

Her inner life was so beautiful that it can only be a record of praise upon praise; and it might have seemed more graceful and appropriate had the tribute come from some other hand. Unfortunately none other exists. Mrs. Henry Wood's life was so self-contained that only those connected with her by the closest bonds of relationship knew her intimately. Even with these there was ever a certain reticence which made them feel that in some sense her life was lived apart from them and from the whole world. There was within her a yet higher and deeper life into which none were permitted to intrude.

In presence of the solemn Mystery of Death, also, all other thoughts and considerations must yield. The ordinary rules and conventionalities of life have no place. In the most sacred of all earthly ties—that existing between mother and son—scope may be allowed and indulgence given, and praise that might have come better from others must be looked upon as Sorrow's tribute placed reverently upon the tomb of the sacred departed; making that natural and becoming which might not be quite so under other circumstances.

I can only affirm that the following pages are a most unworthy, most unexaggerated record of a singularly perfect life, to which it is as impossible to render justice as it is impossible, in mere words, to describe the influence of everything that is lovely and of good report.

I.

MRS. HENRY WOOD was born when the present century was still young. It has gone forth to the world—I know not how—that she

was born in the year 1820. This is a mistake. She was born on the 17th of January, 1814, and consequently, at the time of her death, was seventy-three years of age. Yet no one ever thought or spoke of her as being old. She had the rare gift of perpetual youth. Her eye was as bright, her face as young, her complexion as fair and brilliant, her mind as sparkling, and her heart as green, as they had been fifty years ago.

She was christened Ellen, and was the daughter of Mr. Thomas Price, one of the largest glove manufacturers in the city of Worcester ; as his father had been before him.

Mr. Thomas Price, an only child, inherited considerable property from his father, who died at the early age of forty-seven, and had been known as the finest and handsomest man in the Faithful City. His son Thomas had received what would have been a very advanced education even in these days, and was a very exceptional one in those. He was a man of remarkable intellect, of great refinement and taste.

I once saw him, and only once, when my parents came over to England on a short visit, and brought me with them. I was very young at the time, and can just remember the effect made upon me by a venerable gentleman, with calm and dignified manners and a subdued voice ; with an abundance of white hair and a face beautiful in age. Perhaps what most impressed me were the large frills he always wore to his shirts, and about which he was very fastidious, even after they had gone out of fashion. His hands were white and delicate as a woman's.

Child as I was—I could not have been more than five years old—the impression made upon me by this vision of age and dignity, the certain awe and veneration it created in a childhood that was peculiarly impressionable, never passed away. Yet the interviews, as far as I was concerned, were few and short, and had taken place in London. He had come up to town to visit his daughter, as she was unable, on that occasion, to go down into Worcestershire.

II.

Up to the age of seven, Mrs. Henry Wood was brought up in the house of her grandmother, a lady who adorned her home, but took no part in its arrangement. This was relegated to the care of a housekeeper, who managed everything, and was responsible for the duties of the other servants of the household. She was called Mrs. Tipton, was a very original character, and was never seen in anything but black silk. She had been with her mistress from the time of her marriage and remained with her until her death.

The little child was Mrs. Tipton's especial charge, though she also had her own particular attendant to wait upon her. She also had her own special rooms, and though so great a favourite with her grand-

mother, was only allowed to be with her at stated times. Children in those days, it is needless to say, were brought up far more strictly and severely than they are in these.

It was the housekeeper, Mrs. Tipton, who generally accompanied the little child in her morning walks, whilst in the afternoons she was always expected to drive out with her grandmother. Her place in the carriage was never filled. The housekeeper, when no one else was present, generally accompanied them in these drives, in attendance upon her little charge. It was on such an occasion that she gave expression to one of her quaint sayings, which was ever afterwards remembered against her.

They were passing a churchyard at some distance from Worcester, when Mrs. Tipton, looking up, suddenly exclaimed :

“ Oh, ma'am ! what a healthy, *bracing* spot for a churchyard ! How I should like to be buried there when my time comes ! ”

She was promised that her wish should be regarded, but whether it was ever carried out in the end, I do not remember to have heard.

It was in one of their morning walks that the housekeeper, whilst probably saving the life of her charge, also very possibly laid the foundation for much future delicacy.

They were passing through a field, when suddenly an infuriated bull, attracted by a red dress or hood that the child was wearing, made a rush, and charged at them across the field.

Mrs. Tipton, paralyzed with fear, took the child in her arms, and fled for her life. She gained the hedge, but no point of exit. The bull was upon them ; and scarcely knowing what she did, she threw the little girl high over the hedge into an adjoining field.

How she eventually escaped herself, she never could quite tell afterwards ; but she did escape. On reaching the next field, she found her charge lying where she had fallen ; pale, but apparently unhurt.

Genius, in childhood, is said to be either very awakened or very backward. In my mother's case it was the former. At seven years old she had gone through, without effort, the studies of girls twice her age. She could repeat, rapidly and correctly, whole poems, such as Gray's "Elegy" and the "Deserted Village;" and at ten years old she had read a great part of Shakespeare. At all times her memory was marvellous, almost miraculous. It was only last year that one of her children having asked a question with regard to Sterne's "Maria," she immediately and fluently repeated two whole pages bearing upon the question. Yet she had never opened the book since she was thirteen : an interval of sixty years.

With regard to her lessons, her daily tasks, she never had to read them through more than once, after which she could repeat them fluently. History was her favourite and beloved study ; geography she disliked. All her wishes in her early home were regarded. She

was indulged in every possible way, but could not be spoiled. It may be said, with all truth and with all reverence, that the Hand of God was upon her, and that she was ever in His keeping. "Thou wilt hide me under the shadow of Thy wings, and I shall be safe from fear of evil." I have never heard this verse read in church without thinking of my mother.

Her grandmother supplied her with unlimited pocket-money ; but where in most cases it would have been exchanged for dolls, toys, and bonbons, in my mother's case it was invariably spent in books.

When she was seven years old, Mr. William Price died after a few months' illness ; an illness which had baffled the skill of all physicians, who could not even guess at the nature of his malady. He suffered no pain ; yet no relief could be obtained ; no food could be digested. He gradually faded and passed away.

After death, when lying in his coffin, it was thought right to take in his little grand-daughter—of whom he had been so fond, and who had returned all his affection—for one look before the last sad office was performed and the face was for ever closed to mortal eyes.

The act was, no doubt, prompted by a good and kindly feeling, but it was a mistake. The child, peculiarly imaginative, sensitive and impressionable to the last degree, was so terrified and affected by the sight that she fell into violent hysterics, and for many hours they feared for the result. In time she calmed down, and the effect disappeared ; but the impression remained, and was never forgotten by herself in after years.

III.

AFTER the death of her grandfather, changes were made in the household, and it was decided that the little girl should return to her own home. She had only been lent for a time.

For her, this meant the commencement of a new life. At her grandmother's she had been made the first consideration ; had been indulged in every way ; her every wish had been studied, as much as it was possible to do so in those days of discipline ; but her sweet nature, as I have said, could not be spoiled.

She now became the companion of her father, whose cultivated mind greatly guided her from that hour, and, no doubt, had considerable influence in directing the growth of her intellect. Over and above her governess, he superintended her studies and indicated her reading ; and she ever looked up to him with the deepest reverence and affection.

I have remarked that he was a man of great mental power ; a refined and polished gentleman, as well as one of the most accomplished scholars of his day ; looked up to by all, respected by high and low, ever known as the friend and protector of the poor and suffering.

Singularly calm in the ordinary ways and walks of life, nothing roused him so much as the tyranny and oppression of those who had no power to help themselves. And it was almost a proverb in Worcester that, whoever might be present at any public meeting, however important, Mr. Price's opinion would carry the day ; and the poor—if they happened to be in question—would certainly get their rights. He was a man of few words, and spoke in the quietest tones ; but all he said was pointed by such sound sense and judgment that he was seldom known to fail in carrying his point.

It must also be remembered that we are now writing of some sixty or seventy years ago and more, when the world was very different from what it is now : and, as regards the poor, they had only the rich to trust to for their privileges.

It was with such a man that my mother's earlier life was passed : exactly the man and mind to strengthen and nourish the good seed abounding in her heart. The home was a quiet one of abundance, with more life and movement about it than had been the case in the home of her grandmother. Mr. Price was a great classical scholar, and some of the learned dignitaries of the cathedral would not infrequently consult him upon abstruse points, and accept his opinion in preference to theirs. He was intimate with many, and was, indeed, more fitted to be a dignitary himself than to be the head of a manufactory. He was an especial favourite of one of the bishops, who lamented to him on his death-bed that he had not a son in the Church whose interest he might have advanced.

He was also an accomplished musician, of which art he was passionately fond ; and his sketches in water colours were far above the average of amateur productions. Landscapes, interiors, men and women, he did all equally well ; but he could not draw an animal, with which he was as unsuccessful as was Turner with his figures. He was a great chess player, moved with extreme rapidity, and rarely lost a game. Everything he undertook, he mastered.

There is no doubt that Mrs. Henry Wood inherited much of her literary talent from her father. He read deeply, and although he never wrote, he was of an original and thorough turn of mind. Whatever he attempted was carried out with an earnestness of intention which equally characterised his daughter all through life.

She, also, was very artistic in mind, and in earlier years painted charmingly in water colours. Her subjects were chiefly flowers, and she delighted in arranging and forming her own groups.

Probably no one ever lived with greater taste for preparing flowers wherewith to decorate a table or a room ; and her drawing-rooms in France were at all times made beautiful by a profusion of exotics arranged as no one else could do them. The result in her case was almost magical. It cost her neither time nor trouble. When the flowers had been sorted and placed in vases by a servant, she would go round the rooms, and in a moment, as it were, completely

transform the whole effect, giving beauty and grace where before all had been commonplace and ordinary.

But her painting she soon put aside, and when she took up her pen, her pencil was laid down for ever.

Whilst Mrs. Henry Wood was greatly indebted to her father, there is no doubt she also owed much to her mother. Two more opposite characters than Mr. and Mrs. Price could scarcely have existed, and therefore they blended into a perfect whole.

Mr. Price, thoughtful and scholarly, rarely spoke merely for the sake of saying something. His wife was a small, very pretty woman, with dark, flashing eyes, light, graceful movements, and sparkling wit and conversation. She was as animated and talkative as her husband was the opposite.

She lived to a very advanced age, and when I was fifteen and she was eighty-one, I paid a short visit to Malvern, and as we went together about the hills, she scarcely seemed the elder of the two. To the last she possessed all the life and freshness of youth.

Our conversation naturally often turned upon my mother's works. She was very proud of her daughter and took the liveliest and most intense interest in all she wrote.

"It is my delight," she would say over and over again, "to shut myself into a sitting-room, perfectly alone, with her books. I then feel that I am in the company of a great crowd of living, breathing friends. I see them and know them as much as if they actually existed; and I feel as if they all knew me. If I were suddenly transplanted to the midst of a desert with her books, I should never be lonely or depressed."

Depressed she could never have been under any circumstances. She was then a perfect picture of an old lady, and always wore her hair in the fashion of her younger days: beautifully arranged in small curls one above another on her forehead and temples. It was very picturesque, and added distinction to a face that had always been charming. Before her marriage, she and her sister had been known as "the beautiful Miss Evanses." A generation later, my mother and *her* sister were universally known as "the beautiful Miss Prices." Worcester had always been famous for its beauties, but the two Miss Prices were said to excel them all.

One of her great friends was Mrs. Benson, wife of the then Master of the Temple, and one of the Canons of Worcester Cathedral; and I have in my possession an ancient copy of Milton, given to my grandmother by Mrs. Benson, and which she passed on to me as one of her greatest treasures on the occasion of the visit to Malvern to which I have just alluded. Milton was one of her favourite poets, and she never tired of the grandeur and solemnity of his themes.

IV.

THE mention of Canon Benson brings to my mind the frequency with which I have heard my mother say how much she liked him, both as a girl and a young woman. And it was only last year that my old friend Mr. Whitefoord, the Rector of Whitton, who had also been a friend of Canon Benson's in his earlier days, gave my mother great pleasure by sending her an old and lengthy letter of the Canon's, which he had unearthed from treasures long buried. Though she had not seen his writing for so many years, she at once recognised both it and the familiar style of the writer.

I have often heard her remark that when Canon Benson was in residence, people flocked from far and near to hear him preach. People of all sects and denominations ; Dissenters, and even Quakers who would not have ventured at any other time within the cathedra walls, scarcely have dared to do so. His preaching was remarkable : the quietest, calmest, most earnest that could be conceived. And it was only such calm, quiet preaching that ever impressed my mother. To ranting she could never listen. A loud voice or much action had an effect upon her nervous system and delicate organisation that she was unable to bear, and she would be almost made ill by it.

Such a voice, also, as Canon Benson's was rarely found. It was perfect harmony and music. With all its quietness, every syllable he uttered was distinctly heard by the whole congregation. On the days that he preached, long before service began, there was not standing room to be had ; and the pulpit stairs were crowded up to the very door with people, who had to come down and make way for the Canon as he ascended to his place.

I have so far mentioned him because he was a great feature in my mother's life, standing out with distinct influence upon the canvas of her early days. His name was frequently upon her lips, and to her he was ever the beau-idéal and perfection of all that a preacher and a light in the Church should be. He had one affliction : in his late life he became so deaf that he could not even hear the organ, and when reading the Commandments a sign had always to be made when the organ ceased and it was time for him to go on. It was difficult to say which was the more musical of the two : his pure, distinct voice, or the soft flute stops of the instrument.

It was amongst such people that my mother's early life was passed, and it is this atmosphere which she introduces into so many of her works. Nowhere, perhaps, is it more conspicuous than in her present story, "*Lady Grace.*" One feels that it is taken from life ; that the people are real, and actually have an existence ; that nothing is invented except plot, situations and incidents ; and even some of the latter actually occurred. Cathedral atmosphere, cathedral people, cathedral prejudices, these were a part of her life and nature, her very being, and threw their influence over the whole tone and cast of her mind. With these she was identified. She delighted in the smallest details of

this life as much as in its broad outlines. In all matters ecclesiastical she was an authority.

V.

THE years went on until at the age of thirteen a delicacy began to show itself. Something was wrong with the spine. No doubt in these more advanced days all might have been put right: but sixty years ago the science of medicine—which, even as it is, has made less progress than any other science—was in a very elementary condition. All was done that could be done: but it seemed certain that henceforth a life of more or less suffering and weakness was to be her lot.

And now the quiet, thoughtful girl had to become still quieter and more thoughtful. The doctors did their utmost, but it was little. Her days had to be passed on a reclining board or couch, from which she seldom moved. Reading and study, always her great pleasure and passion, now became her chief resource. Surrounded by her books she was always happy.

Her mind grew and expanded rapidly, but this was probably at the expense of the frail body. As its delicacy increased, so did the singular beauty of her face.

This beauty was something quite out of the common order. It possessed a quality that cannot be described, because it was, so to say, intangible. It was something quite apart from the mere perfection of feature, which she also possessed. Perhaps the word *ethereal* will best give the reader an idea of its character.

The face was a pure oval, of the most refined description: that perfection of form that is so rarely seen. A small, straight, very delicate and refined nose; teeth of dazzling whiteness, entire to the day of her death; a perfect mouth, revealing at once the sensitiveness and tender sympathy of her nature and the steadfastness of her disposition. Her eyes were unusually large, dark and flashing, with a penetrating gaze that seemed to read your inmost thoughts. One felt that everything before her had to be outspoken: for if you uttered only half your thoughts, she would certainly divine the rest.

Nothing escaped her powers of observation. She seemed to learn things by intuition, so that she often surprised one by uttering what seemed like a revelation or the disclosures of an Oracle. She herself was aware of this, and was frequently amused by the result and the astonishment created. At the same time hers were the softest and sweetest eyes imaginable, and one marvelled over and over again, how this singular combination of intellect, penetration, and sweetness could exist—as exist it undoubtedly did.

With it all, her prevailing expression was a look of absolute repose. I remember Lady Lush once saying to me—one of the best women that ever lived: whose life was devoted to good works—that she would give anything to possess my mother's calm expression. But Lady Lush's life was passed in activity, and in the bustle of the

world ; my mother's to a great extent in the retirement of her study. Her health never permitted of anything else ; and even after a quiet but animated evening with friends, she would sometimes suffer from a fit of nervous exhaustion, which would feel to her almost like death itself.

This calmness and serenity came from within. It seemed as if her whole life, with all its cares, responsibilities and joys, was taken to a higher Power and Refuge than any on earth, and there reposed in the security of perfect faith. This was, indeed, the case. She never spoke of these matters, but she was the living, breathing embodiment of the verse : "Thou shalt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."

The head was well set upon the shoulders : a head perfect in form, small, except where the intellectual faculties were developed. Her complexion was dazzling, the most lovely bloom at all times contrasting with the brilliant whiteness of her skin. In hours of animation I have watched the delicate flush come and go a hundred times in as many minutes across her wonderful countenance ; and, to record the simile once used by a friend in speaking to me of this peculiar beauty, "chasing each other like the rosy clouds of sunrise sweeping across a summer sky." She had a very keen sense of wit and humour.

This strange beauty remained with her to the end! Even in hours of illness and suffering it never forsook her. Her face never lost its look of youth. It was absolutely without line or wrinkle or any mark or sign of age. She kept to the last the complexion and freshness of a young girl : that strange radiancy which seemed the reflection of some unseen glory. This was so great that to the last we were unable to realise that death could come to her.

I fear this may sound very like exaggeration, but many living friends will bear witness that it only falls short of the facts. I have said that these simple records would have come more appropriately from some other hand than mine ; but as mine is the task, I can only do it to the best of my ability, and with absolute truth. I cannot do less than justice to her who for so many years was unto us as a fortress firm and sure ; whose wisdom was unfailing ; whose love was boundless ; who would never at any moment have hesitated to lay down her life for those she loved, had the trial been demanded of her ; whose loss is as the withdrawing of the sun from our sky, the life and beauty of all that was to us most sacred and most dear.

The description lately given of her by an unknown writer, who yet must have met her, is as true as anything that could be written of her : "You can almost see the spirit itself of Mrs. Henry Wood shining through the frail, I had almost said diaphanous, body and exquisite face ; and the sight only rivets and charms one more and more ; for she possesses a sparkling intellect and a heart of gold."

VI

IT is said of most literary people that they are not domesticated. My mother was eminently so. Her household was perfectly ruled ; the most complete order and system reigned. Her servants were expected to do their duties without any interference. It was the rarest thing for any servant to leave her. She never omitted, morning by morning, to have an interview with her housekeeper ; when the orders were given for the day, down to the smallest item concerning luncheon or dinner. Punctuality was a strict rule of the house : everything was ready to the moment ordered. There was no effort, no jarring, no ruling except by quiet, firm influence. The complaints about domestics so often heard in these days were never heard in my mother's house, and never existed.

She was a very early riser. Punctually at seven o'clock, summer and winter, her maid went into her room, drew up the blinds, and she rose immediately after. A few minutes after eight, she went into her study, where she invariably breakfasted alone, never coming down, except upon very special occasions, until one o'clock, when her work was over for the day.

Of her benevolence, perhaps a few words may be recorded. Her charity was unbounded. It might be said of her : "She stretcheth out her hands to the poor ; yea she reacheth forth her hand to the needy." Her pensioners were many. No one ever applied to her in vain if they were found worthy. She gave away many hundreds a year, yet always with discretion. Very much was done in secret, and all was done, as all else in her life, unobtrusively. Her sympathy with suffering and sorrow was profound.

But we have not quite done with her girlhood.

From the age of thirteen to seventeen my mother's life may be said to have been spent on her reclining board and couch. No doubt this greatly tended to bend her mind in the direction it took ; just as Scott's long illness about the same age strengthened and developed all his own powers of romance. No doubt, also, it gave her that matured habit of thought and calm, sound judgment for which in after life she was distinguished. Her imagination grew with her growth and her reading, but so did her good sense. Considering the occupation of her life, and her constant exercise of the gift of ideality, the common sense she exercised on all possible occasions was as singular as it was remarkable.

At the age of seventeen the curvature of the spine became confirmed and settled. She was pronounced cured. That is to say, she ceased to suffer. Nothing more could be done. It was no longer necessary to be always reclining. In earlier life very little amiss was to be seen with the figure, except that she remained small and short, her height not exceeding five feet two. But, the spine excepted, she was so perfectly formed that her movements were at all times full of

grace and dignity. Her constitution was remarkably sound, but the body henceforth was to be frail, delicate, absolutely without muscular power. She could at no time raise an ordinary weight, or ever carry anything heavier than a small book or a parasol.

Whether this weakness of the spine had anything to do with the fall when she was thrown over the hedge by Mrs. Tipton, the house-keeper : or whether it was a certain weakness born with her, and which had to develop itself in any case : or whether the strength and activity of the brain overpowered the weaker body : this can never be known. In any case it was to be.

I think it was probably due to the latter cause, for many writers have suffered in a similar manner.

It was once said to me by one who knew all three, that if you followed Miss Mitford, Mrs. Barrett Browning, and Mrs. Henry Wood down a street, walking side by side, you could scarcely tell one from the other, so much were their figures alike.

Another, who at this moment occurs to me, was Julia Kavanagh. She has told me that in early life she suffered exactly as my mother had suffered ; but she was even smaller and shorter, and the mischief in her case was more evident. She, too, had large, beautiful brown eyes, with a singular softness and sweetness about them, through which one saw shining the spirit of purity and devotion.

There is no doubt that the cultivation of the intellect is often purchased at the expense of muscular power. The constitution may remain vigorous, but whatever is done or accomplished in life has to be done through the brain. Bodily toil or exertion becomes impossible.

With my mother the frailty of the body was so pronounced that every word of "East Lynne" was written in a reclining chair with her manuscript paper upon her knees.

VII.

WHEN about twenty years of age, trouble came to her home. Trouble not from within but from without. Not the overwhelming disasters that overtook many households, but sufficient to make a marked change in her life.

It was about this time that Huskisson, with the desire for "Free Trade" which has since characterised a certain number of English statesmen, opened the British ports for the introduction of foreign goods.

The immediate effect upon the English glove manufacturers was disastrous. Men of limited works and means were ruined and disappeared for ever. Those who could weather the storm did so at immense sacrifices.

Amongst these was Mr. Price. Ever thoughtful and considerate for others, and especially so for those beneath him or dependent upon him, though he employed a very large number of workpeople,

he would not discharge one of them. For long they remained absolutely idle. It was generally supposed that when the evil wrought came to be realised, the ports would be closed again. For years manufacturers went on hoping against hope. In this and other ways for many weeks, week after week, and week by week, Mr. Price lost each week what to many would have been a large fortune.

Matters were growing serious. Thousands of working men and women were thrown out of work; thousands were starving. Huskisson saw the mistake he had made when it was too late. The mischief was done; the evil had fallen. Ruined masters could not be reinstated: the thousands of operatives had scattered over the land: or had found other occupation: or had died of want and despair.

Mr. Price felt the blow equally with others, but, thanks to private resources, he was by no means ruined. Had he retired at once, he might have done so with wealth and honour. Probably, he too thought that when those who had done this mischief saw the evil they had brought upon the land, they would do their best to correct it. It is in human nature to go on hoping against hope. It was a very forlorn hope in this instance. The Bill had passed, the deed was done. The evil came to the few, as was predicted by the very men who wrought it; but it came to the many also; whilst the benefits that were to follow to the millions were never traced.

Chiefly for his workpeople Mr. Price had kept on. He saw misery and ruin, distress and famine around him; as far as he was able, his own people should be spared. But he paid a great price for all this upright dealing and noble conduct. Though even now it was not absolutely necessary, yet he thought it right to diminish his household and his expenditure, and to continue life in a much simpler manner than that to which he had been born and bred.

Probably very few living remember the devastation and ruin worked at this time in many of the manufacturing towns of England. But, as in "*Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles*," Mrs. Henry Wood has given a detailed description of the manufactories, their ways, and works; so in "*Mildred Arkell*," and especially in the chapter headed *A City's Desolation*, she has recorded the misery and despair that fell upon so many parts of England on this opening of the British ports.

The wealth Mr. Price then lost he never recovered. All had not gone. He was fortunately a man of sufficient property, and enjoyed an easy competence to the last; but this was all very different from what it once had been.

VIII.

THE next change in my mother's life was her marriage with Mr. Henry Wood, who was at the head of a large shipping and banking firm abroad. He was also for some time in the consular service, and it was said by Lord Palmerston in his later days that he had

never, in all his experience, received such clear and satisfactory documents and reports as those invariably sent in by Mr. Henry Wood. He retired early into private life, and died, comparatively speaking, a young man.

It was a singular coincidence that he was somewhat nearly related to one who bore his name, and was for many years Canon of Worcester Cathedral, and who died only last year full of age and honour.

Another coincidence was, that in marrying Miss Price he was marrying into an old family name, though they were in no way related. He was heir to a considerable property left to the family by an ancestor named Price, who in 1741 went out as Governor of Surat. He died in 1780, leaving property, which, unclaimed by his family, remained in the hands of the East India Company until it passed over to the Government. There it still remains, to enable my father's descendants to indulge in Aladdin-like visions of wealth and airy castles, from which perhaps they derive as much pleasure as if they possessed them in reality.

My father, though a man of great intellectual power, possessed a very different cast of mind from that of his wife. He was almost devoid of imagination. Novels he scarcely ever read; poetry he would not look at; but abstruse books of science were his delight. Yet in social life he was the gayest of the gay.

He had a great gift for languages, and those he had mastered he spoke fluently. No Frenchman hearing him speak French for the first time would believe that he was English. This, in the most delicate and therefore difficult of European tongues, was a great test. To his children it came naturally, as their mother tongue; with him it was acquired, and therefore the greater merit. He was a first-rate public speaker, and a great politician on the Conservative side.

He possessed another gift also—that of Medicine; loving it for its own sake. Out of pure admiration for the work and science, he walked the hospitals of London, performed operations, went through the whole curriculum. And this not with any idea of practising—he never did practise, and never intended to do so—but from absolute devotion to the art. He was a great friend of the late Sir William Lawrence; who, indeed, in the only illness he was ever known to have until his last and fatal illness, saved his life. He had the strength of a man with the tenderness of a woman.

I have said that he never practised, but I ought to make one exception. As long as he lived, we never needed a doctor, never had one. He was all-sufficient; and through all the illnesses to which childhood is heir, he brought us to safe and speedy convalescence. This was twice fortunate for us, who were living abroad, and must otherwise have been at the mercy of foreign physicians. These as often kill as cure. It is only the French surgeons who excel in skill.

It was, indeed, the fatal treatment of a French doctor which determined him to take matters henceforth into his own hands.

At that time two children had been born to him : his eldest son, Henry, named after himself, and a daughter, Ellen, named after her mother. The little girl was seized with scarlet fever, and my father, then a young man, feared to take so much responsibility upon himself. He was devoted to his children, but especially so to his little daughter. I have heard her described as a very sweet child, and people frequently said she was too good to live. Their prophecies proved only too true.

The doctors treated her as they always treated the malady in those days. They first of all starved her, and when she was sinking from exhaustion applied leeches to the throat. The faithful nurse, who was then a member of the household, has ever since belonged to us, and been looked upon as a firm friend of the family, protested in vain.

"Monsieur," she cried to her master, distractedly raising her hands in agonies of despair, "do not allow it. If this thing is done and the leeches are applied, I tell you the child will die."

They were applied ; the little throat closed up, and the child died. For long the sorrow of the father was such, it was feared that he would die also. The faithful nurse was almost equally affected. She was one of those strong and determined characters who will have their own way in everything ; the under nurses had to obey her every look, and even the mother's authority in her nursery was not absolute.

She was as tenacious in her affections as she was strong in character. None but herself was allowed to perform the last sad offices for the pure and beautiful little creature who had gone to a better world. With her own hands she placed her in her little coffin, watched over it night and day, until the little body was consigned to the earth, and hidden away for ever from mortal eyes.

But my father had had enough of French doctors. The day his little girl died, his son was taken ill with the fever. "This," he said, sadly, "shall now be my care ; come what may I will have no more French doctors in the house." And in a fortnight the little fellow was well again and running about.

Years afterwards, when another little daughter was born to them, my father—who regarded his wife as a woman far above rubies ; and who thought to the end of his life the world contained none like her—again insisted that the name Ellen should be repeated.

His wife, whose vivid imagination perhaps inclined her to be slightly superstitious, hesitated : a compromise was eventually agreed upon by the addition of the name of Mary : and Ellen Mary she was accordingly christened. Had he been blessed with twelve daughters instead of two, I believe that every one of them, amongst other names, would have borne that of Ellen.

The name exactly suited my mother : soft, liquid, flowing easily.

It expressed her own gentle, quiet nature. So much gentle softness was perhaps never before united to so much vigour of mind.

Amongst the many charms that characterised her was a very rare one. She had little ear for music, no voice whatever for singing ; but in speaking her voice was music itself. Sweet and low, clear and distinct, it was like a silver bell in the house, like the softest flute. Those who heard it once, never forgot it. By reason of its beauty, it rang in your ears long after you had passed out of her presence. It rings in mine as I write, where it will ring for ever. No music in heaven will be sweeter : no face will be fairer.

"The sound of a voice that is still," can scarcely be applied in this instance. Her voice and her presence do not seem to be withdrawn. It is impossible to pass her room and believe that she is no longer there. Such presence and influence as hers do not cease with death. It was sufficient if she were only in the house : a subtle, impalpable something told you that it was so, even though unseen : and it was light and life to those about her. With her amongst us we were lifted at once far above the ordinary conditions of everyday existence.

IX.

AFTER her marriage, Mrs. Henry Wood went abroad, and England for many years ceased to be her home. It was a great change of life and atmosphere for the young girl, who, until now, had known only the quiet and retirement of a Cathedral city, had consorted with its grave clergy : years of which life, moreover, had been passed on a reclining board and a couch, from which she was seldom permitted to stir.

At first, I have heard her say, she did not like the change, though she went to a beautiful home, and was surrounded by all that wealth could supply or affection dictate. But her mind was unusually faithful to old impressions, singularly tenacious, and many elements dear to her in the old life were wanting in the new.

She mixed in a different social atmosphere. The gravity and dignity of a cathedral city were exchanged for the gaiety and sparkle that distinguish so many French towns. The language, too, was foreign. Though she had studied French, she could not speak it. In time she came to do so as fluently as English, but that was only in after years.

The cathedral itself was a very great loss to her. She missed the beautiful services ; the quiet dignity and solemnity with which everything was done there ; the chanting of the prayers, the influence of the building itself, and the beauty of the great east window, so often alluded to in her works.

To the end she delighted in rich colours, and it was ever her pleasure to blend them about her in her sitting-rooms. For hours she would sit in her drawing-room watching the prismatic reflections thrown from a crystal upon an opposite wall, whilst plots and ideas for her works would flash through her brain with strange ease and fertility.

But as time went on she grew reconciled to the change, and in the end very much liked her Continental life, and looked back upon it as upon very happy days.

She had another great source of pleasure. She always slept well, but she dreamed constantly, and it was ever the greatest delight to her to recall her dreams. The remembrance of them did not pass away, as they do with most people. She would dream whole consecutive histories; she was ever wandering in the loveliest realms, amongst the sweetest flowers. These dreams never forsook her throughout life. In her very last days when waking out of sleep, she would say to those about her how beautiful her dreams had been.

No wonder. Her imagination was continually exercised. Her spirit was pure and lovely above any we ever knew; her face was the reflection of every beauty and every virtue; her waking thoughts were ever full of compassion and consideration for others. An unkindly thought never entered her heart; an unkindly or uncharitable word was never heard upon her lips.

Whilst very rarely giving expression to her emotions—she was, indeed, in these matters, singularly reticent and self-contained—love and compassion were the key-notes of her life. It is a fact that she was never known to make an enemy. Every one who knew her agreed in loving and praising her. It could not have been otherwise. Her very sweetness disarmed all antagonism. The weaknesses of her sex seemed to have passed her by. Faithful friend, charming and intellectual companion, she yet never for a moment indulged in frivolous chatter and gossip; and such was her unconscious influence that scandal was never mentioned before her.

There was of course one great reason for all this personal influence and beauty of living. She was, in a quiet, unostentatious way, one of the most religious and devout women that ever lived. She had a firm, unwavering faith. Her heart at all times seemed fixed upon the things unseen rather than upon the things of earth. Her whole life was one long, silent sermon, one unbroken example of the strength and truth of religion. Her unspoken text in life was: "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy paths." She absolutely lived up to it. And in response came the promise ever fulfilled in her case: "Them that honour Me, I will honour."

But it was all done in the most unobtrusive manner; not with the desire of reading a lesson to others, or of being a pattern. Nothing was ever farther from her mind. It was part of her nature; it was herself. She had one model before her; one Master to serve; and she ever looked upwards.

Only in this manner can such a life as hers be lived. Otherwise, all the disturbing elements of earth would inevitably come in and trouble the harmony of the whole, and constant failure would be the result. Human nature is at best imperfect; but as far as it was possible, hers was a perfect life.

It was all lived in the quietest, calmest, most gentle manner. I have said that she never preached to others. Religion was never mentioned by her. It was far too sacred a thing to be made a topic of conversation. On rare occasions, when it became her absolute duty to speak, her words were few, but impressive with the rare power of earnestness and conviction. She never wearied even her children with lengthened sittings and difficult tasks : but she never omitted to have them with her morning after morning ; and if the beautiful face and voice, and the earnest tone and manner, failed in their mission, it must be that there could be no power in any earthly influence.

It seems to me right to insist upon this, the highest and best of all her gifts, because it has been too often the case that where great powers of the imagination have existed, the higher spiritual gifts have been absent from their possessors.

It was also the unobtrusiveness of my mother's spiritual life that gave it so much power. She persuaded and conquered by the force of example alone. She was followed, yet she never commanded or dictated.

Her unswerving faith never failed her to the last. It was not likely to do so. She bore many weeks of great suffering without a murmur, never losing her serenity, her brightness ; that calm, trusting glance, which ever spoke of a Peace not of this world ; and she saw the last dread hour approaching with a heroism that cannot be told, a full, firm faith and reliance upon Him in whom she had trusted. Whilst those about her, and near and dear to her, had sometimes to hasten from the room to conceal the emotion it was not always possible to control, her eye remained undimmed, her calmness never forsook her.

X.

To go back for a moment to the earlier days of her married life.

I have said that the change from a cathedral city to a Continental town was a great one. Many old influences dear to her disappeared for ever. Above all, the companionship of her father, his cultivated mind and constant influence. They had been everything to each other. The *Times*, in reviewing "East Lynne," said they had never yet met with any female author possessing her exceptional power for depicting *men*, especially *noble men* ; and there is no doubt the great model she frequently set before her was the father with whom her most impressionable years had been passed.

One other man had great influence upon her life : Dr. Murray, who was then Dean of Worcester and at the same time Bishop of Rochester. He was perhaps the handsomest and most dignified man who ever wore bishop's robes, and he was dignified and influential in all his domestic relations.

From all this she was transferred to France, with its blue skies and balmy atmosphere. But the climate did not always suit her.

Her delicate frame could never bear great heat, which affected her nervous system in a very peculiar manner.

Depression of mind was unknown to her : but in the extreme heat of summer, she could only sit or recline, clad in thin gauze or muslin, and there was ever upon her a weight of some great impending evil or calamity. Had it been her fate to go out to such a climate as that of India, for instance, there is no doubt that she would soon have died.

Once, in the South of France, she was nearly overtaken by a great misfortune.

She was much tormented by gnats, and these troublesome insects, one summer, so affected her left hand, that fears were entertained for the result. A consultation of surgeons ended in a divided opinion as to the necessity for taking the hand off, and for some time it seemed that she must lose it. One of the doctors, however, held out, and in the end it was saved, and she perfectly recovered. She had the most perfect hands and arms almost ever seen : the whitest, most delicate, most fragile, and most beautiful.

In her married life, my mother, like everyone else in this world, had many troubles and trials. Some of them, indeed, were singularly great and overwhelming : and it may be said that her character was made perfect through suffering.

My father, an intellectual and talented man, might have risen to any distinction in the world, and ought to have died the possessor of great wealth. His income at the time of his marriage, numbered many thousands a year. Everyone fell under the charm of his manner and conversation. In every assembly he was the leading spirit. But he had one fault. He wanted the solidity of character and earnest steadfastness of purpose which so eminently distinguished his wife.

Up to the time of his retirement he had been a man of the rarest activity and energy. He was ever ready to do everything for everyone, but, alas, seldom thought of himself. One or two of the great railways in France owed their final consolidation to his wonderful financial and organising powers, and his singular conviction of success in all he undertook. He possessed a temperament sanguine to a fault, but it sometimes enabled him to triumph where others would have failed.

Whilst my mother was a great reader of countenance, my father was absolutely devoid of the faculty. He believed in everyone. The simplest tale would impose upon him. He was generous to recklessness, and whether a friend came to him to borrow twenty pounds or two thousand, it is simply a fact that he had only to ask and to have the larger sum just as readily as the smaller.

The consequence was that no one was so popular, and no one's goodness was so much abused.

This is rather a fatal gift for going through life, and my father's

wealth rapidly diminished. Before very many years were over he saw that, in spite of his undoubted powers, he was really unfit for active life; he retired, and, in 1866, died, comparatively speaking, a young man.

Shortly before this they had returned to England. For some years my mother had taken up her pen, and, month after month, had contributed stories to *Bentley's Miscellany*, and *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*. These magazines were then the property of William Harrison Ainsworth. My mother's stories appeared anonymously, but attracted much attention; and there is no doubt that they, in conjunction with the charming and admirable essays of William Francis Ainsworth, kept the magazines from extinction—a fate, I believe, they eventually suffered.

One anecdote may here be given in reference to these stories. My father and mother had come over to England for a short visit, and were staying at a private hotel in Dover Street, Piccadilly, where they happened to make the acquaintance of some charming people—a lady and gentleman who were staying there at the same time.

At this period my mother was writing a series of letters supposed to be written by a young officer out in the Crimea. They were called “Ensign Tom Pepper's Letters from the Seat of War.”

One morning the lady in question mentioned to my mother that her husband had gone out for a magazine. “He is deeply interested in some letters that are appearing in *Colburn's New Monthly*,” she said, “and can scarcely wait patiently from one month to another. *We are both certain they are genuine*,” she added, emphatically.

My mother, who seldom spoke of her writing to her most intimate friends, and never at all to strangers, could not help laughing at the singular situation; and great was their astonishment at finding that the author of those masculine and realistic letters was none other than the calm, gentle, refined lady whose acquaintance they had so recently made.

XI.

BUT my pen has carried me beyond its limits, and I cannot here enter upon my mother's new life, which began with her literary career. This must be reserved for another paper, and for next month.

I have very rapidly sketched some of the events of her earlier life. Later on, and not for these pages, the picture may be filled in more elaborately.

It is certain that the beauty of her life ought to be known, and could never be too widely circulated. Faithfully depicted, it could only have a lasting influence for good upon everyone who read it; for the faithful record of one good life is above the power of all the sermons that ever were written.

It may seem that I have exaggerated her charms and virtues;

have made her too perfect a character. It is, indeed, difficult to write calmly and dispassionately about her. I repeat, again, how much I feel that the task should have been placed in other hands, had they existed. But they do not exist. I have nothing but praise to record; nothing else was possible in all the days of her life. I can only appeal to the "great cloud of witnesses" who knew her to bear me testimony that I have stayed my hand where I might have said much more.

I have letters by me from great men, who declare that her influence upon them will follow them through life, and I feel that they have uttered no exaggeration; no mere form of words.

A few weeks before the end, she was, and had been for long, in better health than usual. It has been stated that she was crippled with infirmities. Nothing could be more incorrect. She had scarcely left the house for two years, but she had kept perfectly well at home, bright and quietly animated as ever. She felt that she was growing weaker, and would sometimes say so, but there was no difference in her to reveal the hidden mischief.

It was the curvature of the spine, dating back sixty years, that was to prove fatal now. This for two years had been getting worse, though none knew it. It was an *inward* curvature; and as it increased, it pressed upon the heart, and gradually prevented it from exercising its functions.

On Christmas Day, 1886, she caught cold, and came down for the last time. No one dreamed of a fatal termination to her illness. But from that day until the end—February 10th—she suffered the intense agony of inability to breathe, and ever-growing weakness and weariness. This arose from the heart pressure.

It was only at the beginning of February that those around her became seriously alarmed; and even then a consultation of doctors led to the hope that her life might still be spared.

It was not to be. On the 10th of February, 1887, at about half-past three in the morning, with her hand in that of the writer she passed away: so gently, that none knew the exact moment when the summons came.

Such is the loss to those who are left. If the whole universe were laid at their feet, it could in nothing fill the void created by a sorrow never to pass away, a silence never to be broken. For her, it may indeed be said with Jacob, "They will go down mourning to the grave;" but that she was, and for what she was, they can only sing an everlasting song of thanksgiving. The 31st chapter of Proverbs in its description of a good woman is true to her throughout: and in Solomon's words—and I would that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever—"HER CHILDREN ARISE UP, AND CALL HER BLESSED."

CHARLES W. WOOD.

MARIONETTES.

IT is venti-quattro, the hour of sunset, and through the town the bells are ringing out, one after the other, a clash of sweet sounds.

In the west the sun has sunk below the horizon, but the afterglow remains—a gorgeous sight. The whole of the sky is painted in deepest gold, shading off above into the blue of an Italian sky. Against such a background the cypresses stand out dark, and the tower and roofs of the houses on yonder hill are well defined.

It is late in November, in the year 188—, and already the days are beginning to shorten. Along the streets, and by the river which runs through the town, carriages are hurrying. There is a little crowd at the corner to watch them as they pass, and to admire the brilliant toilettes of the fair occupants. Behind it all, leaning against the wall, is the slender figure of a young man. To look at him is to feel certain at once that he belongs to the very poor. His hat is slouched over his eyes, but the face looks pale, with good features; his dress is very shabby, and his attitude is one of listless weariness.

He moves at last, and, turning to the left, passes into a back street.

Here it is almost dark. The lovely afterglow does not penetrate into these narrow streets; only a strip of blue sky is to be seen above, with a few stars twinkling. On he goes; up one street, down another, half across the big town, until he comes to a little open path. There is a sound of music, a noisy drum being played with intense vigour, and a pipe rather out of tune, but still effective. There is a structure which looks quite imposing by this uncertain light, though by daylight it is shabby enough; and on the front is a large placard, proclaiming that inside are to be seen the famous Marionettes. As the figure approaches, a little boy runs out from between some curtains at the back.

“Why, Mimi, what is it?” says the man, stopping.

“Babbo, come, come,” shouts the little fellow; “there are ten people inside. Three grandi signori in the best places, and mamma has dressed the Queen of Sheba in her new dress. She is beautiful in white, with a real gilt paper crown. We are waiting for you, and then we will have macaroni for supper.”

It is late at night, the performance is over, the poor little theatre is in darkness, and the Marionettes are all safely put to bed in a great big trunk. And now in the little room at the back there is joy and content, for on the table stands a steaming dish of macaroni, flanked by a flask of thin red Tuscan wine. Round the table are gathered the little family.

The mother, who looks very young, with dark eyes and fair hair; in her arms is a baby, who sits up and crows, and gazes in rapture at the lamp before it. Mimi is intent on the macaroni, and until the delightful moment comes for enjoying it, is munching away at a hard crust.

Luigi, the father, has taken off his hat, and looks brighter now than when we first saw him on the bridge. It is a fine, intellectual-looking head, but there are lines of care traced on the forehead, and there is a certain weakness about it, which speaks of a nature not exactly suited to push to the front, in the scramble which we call life. But this evening all anxiety is put away, as money enough has been taken to provide this little family with the necessities of life for at least three or four days to come, and there is hope also for the future.

Christmas will soon be here, and holiday-making people cannot find a better way of amusing themselves for a few pence than in going to see the famous Marionettes. The town is full of strangers, some of whom may condescend also to enter this humble little booth, and admire the Queen of Sheba, and the graceful attitudes of Mademoiselle Rosalie, the dancer, who flies round on one toe, and, finally, springs almost to the top of the stage, to sink afterwards on one knee, and hold out her hands to the audience for applause.

II.

HIGH among the Apennines there is a little village, hidden away in the mountains. It consists of a few houses, some of them very old and small, yet with a certain air of picturesqueness about them, surrounded as they are by the giant mountains, and overshadowed by immense chestnut trees. Above the village stands the little church.

Here it was that, twenty-four years ago, a little dark-eyed, ragged boy, named Luigi Pasterini used to run about, and play the livelong day.

He belonged to a very old woman, who lived in one of the poorest and smallest of the houses, and managed to eke out a scanty living for herself and her grandchild. And because she was known to be so old, and so very, very poor, Luigi became, in a way, the child of the whole "paese." Often a piece of cake, or some nuts or figs were thrust into his little brown hands, in those days, by the kind mothers who had children of their own.

So Luigi grew and throve, nourished by the sun and the sweet air of the mountains, and by the great love the old "nonna" gave him without stint, because she had so little else to give him.

Time went on, and he went to the little school, and learnt all that the old man who kept it could teach him. And then just as he began to wish to leave his home high up among the hills and learn a little what life in the plains was like, the old "nonna" died. It was his

first great sorrow; and though by this time he had grown straight and tall, and considered himself quite a man; yet the day they buried her, and he went back alone to the empty cottage, and there was no one to see, he knelt beside the chair in which she had always sat, and, covering his face with his hands, sobbed as if his heart would break.

The next morning came friends with advice and help.

One of the principal "contadini" had a brother who kept a shop at Bologna. He was well off already, and was making money fast. He wanted a youth to help him keep the accounts, and Luigi could now write a fair hand, and was clever at figures. It would be just what he most desired to get; an honest lad, from his own old "paese." So Luigi was started off for Bologna, with a letter of introduction to the shopkeeper, and a few francs in his pocket: a little sum made up from pence collected by a kind neighbour from the very poor, who are always the most generous.

He said "Good-bye" to all his friends, and to the dear "nonna's" grave, and then started, in the most tidy clothes he possessed, with his few belongings tied up in a handkerchief, for the great world.

The shopkeeper received him kindly. He was pleased with the lad's open face and modest manners, and his heart warmed to one who came from his own country.

The shop was a "cartoleria," and Luigi soon learnt to sell paper and envelopes, and to know exactly the sort of pens or pencils wanted by the different customers. He kept the accounts, too, in a beautiful manner. His master had found a treasure; and as he was a lone man, without wife, or child, or sister, Luigi seemed on the high road to fortune, but for a certain event which took place about five years after he entered the shop.

It was "Il giorno dei morti," always a festival kept most sacred by the Italians, and especially dear to Luigi, who paid for many a mass, out of his small earnings, for the dear "nonna" who had been so good to him, and who still represented to him all he had ever had to love in the world. For his master, though kind and just, was too dignified and severe to inspire such a feeling.

To-day Luigi had been engaged in the shop since the very early morning. He had not been able, as his habit was, to run out for the early mass. So it was almost midday when he started and crossed the square to enter the great cathedral-like church of St. Patronio. At the door were two old men, clothed in bright scarlet cloth cloaks and hoods, seated on chairs, ready to receive the alms of the charitable—and who could refuse a soldo on such a day to the blind and feeble and old? Even Luigi drops his little bit of two centimes into the old man's hand and enters.

As he pushes back the great heavy door, he stops, awe-struck, at the burst of exquisite melody which greets him. There is an orchestra of many instruments—violins, violoncellos, horns—and the music seems just now as if it were the song of the blessed, no

longer dead, but living triumphant. Yes, why weep any longer over the sad graves in yonder Campo Santo? *This* is the sweet song of gratitude, poured out by happy rescued souls at the feet of the Saviour.

Near him, kneeling, with her face upturned and her large soft eyes full of tears, is a young girl.

She is dressed in black, but the little simple dress, made to fit the pretty figure, is of perfect neatness, and the soft hair shades the round, childish face. Luigi looks again and again, and almost forgets to kneel and join in the service, his soul is so full of pity for that sorrowful face. Presently he falls on his knees behind her, and tries hard to forget everything but his devotions.

The service over, he waits until the girl moves. He must and will know who she is, so he drops still farther behind. When she leaves the church, he follows her, most cunningly keeping on the other side of the road.

She does not go far. Across the piazza, and a little way down a street, until she comes to an old arch, through which she passes, and stops before a little shop. No, this it can scarcely be called, for in the windows there is nothing to tempt the passer-by. The door is open, and inside is a humble little room; whitewashed walls and a common chair and table, before which sits an old man, with a bottle of ink and a great bundle of pens, while over the wall is painted the word, "Scrivano."

The girl passes in out of sight, and the door closes.

Luigi hovers about, determined not to leave until he is quite sure that there is nothing more to be learned: and he is rewarded.

At the end of half an hour she comes out with a letter in her hand; and then, when Luigi has watched her quite out of sight, he enters. He knows the old man, who sits there all day to write letters, and it is not difficult to learn from him what he is most anxious to know. Yes, he knows the girl; and a pretty girl she is, and a good little thing, too; but he fears that she has had a sad sort of life of it with that cross old uncle. Why, does not Gigi know him? Old Piero Vanni, to whom the Marionettes belong? Very good Marionettes they are, too, and well do they merit a visit. He advises him to go and see them, and then, perhaps, he may catch a glimpse of pretty Chiara as well.

Needless to say that the first spare evening, Luigi started off to see the show; and many a time afterwards he was to be found there, until at last, one happy evening, he managed to speak to Chiara. He had made the acquaintance of the uncle some weeks before, and had found him all that had been described—old and cross and disagreeable, but clever with his Marionettes.

After this, the little romance progressed without let or hindrance. For once the course of true love did run smoothly.

There was no one to object to the young people doing exactly as

they liked, except the old uncle, and he was rather proud that his little Chiara should be sought by a young man of whom all the neighbours spoke so well. Besides—and this was a great point with the old man—Luigi was clever, and he himself was old and feeble now, and might die any day. Then he had nothing in the world to leave his little Chiara but his Marionettes; and what could Chiara do with Marionettes? She could not work them. But Gigi might learn, and do even better in the future than he had done.

So, when, as time went on, and Luigi had won Chiara: had been allowed to take the little hand he loved and hold it in both his own, and kiss the sweet eyes which had won him that day in the Cathedral: it came to be a question of ways and means between himself and Piero. Then that old man made it a condition, that if he married Chiara, he should give up the situation in which he was then, and become owner and manager of the Marionettes.

Luigi was far too much in love to hesitate at any condition. Besides the life seemed to him to have many charms, and held out the hope of much for the future.

So there was a modest wedding in one of the small churches of Bologna, one morning in early spring. And among the few guests present was Luigi's former master. Though he sorely regretted losing the young man, and had quite made up his mind that he was ruining himself by the step he was taking, yet when the time came, he honoured the ceremony with his presence. And more than this: the evening before, he had added quite a handsome sum to the amount due to Luigi; so that altogether, as he had been a careful lad and had saved something, the young people started with what seemed to them riches.

Luigi took his young wife up into the mountains to his own "paese." All who had known him as a boy welcomed him back, and made much of Chiara; and she responded to the simple kindness of the women and children, who were won by her pretty ways as much as all the men were by her pretty face. The month they spent among the hills was for ever after the brightest bit of their lives. Then they returned to Bologna, and Luigi settled down to help Piero in the management of the Marionettes.

A year afterwards, Mimi was born to them, and he became at once the old man's delight and pride. But Piero was growing very feeble and broken now, and the winters are cold and long at Bologna; so when Mimi was two years old, the little family agreed to move to Florence. This journey nearly swallowed up all Luigi's savings, much of which had gone in an illness Chiara had after Mimi's birth, which left her delicate for nearly a year.

Very soon after they were settled at Florence poor old Piero died. This was a grief to them both, and carried off the rest of Luigi's little hoard. Then a baby girl was born to Chiara, and Fortune lately had not been kind to the young couple. Poverty had come to

them, and ill-health and sorrow, and it was with a sad heart that Luigi stood that evening at the corner of the bridge.

III.

THE ten people whose arrival Mimi so joyfully announced to his father seemed, for the time, to be the turning-point of their fortune.

The holiday season was setting in, Christmas was near, and day after day found the little booth fairly filled. Then, after it was all over, and the children were safely in bed, Luigi used to wrap his long cloak round him and, indulging in the luxury of a cheap cigar, would stroll off among the narrow streets of Florence.

The deep repose of the night was of all things most refreshing to him: the darkness only relieved by the quiet light of the moon, which looked down between the two dark lines made by the roofs of the houses on each side of the narrow street. Here and there a light gleamed from a house, where, looking in at the window, you might see the cobbler still working away by the light of a lamp, or the worker in copper hammering at pots and pans.

He avoided the principal streets, full of shops, which were even at that hour of the night brilliantly lighted. Crossing the bridge where the river flowed, its course marked out by dots of brightest light—for so the gas lamps look from a distance—he would go on, choosing always the least used streets. Now and again there would meet him as he passed a rich, full voice singing. Far away one heard it, and then nearer and nearer it came, each note dropping full and round on the still night air. A figure crosses the patch of bright moonlight which falls here upon the pavement. It is a young fellow who looks as if he, too, had been working hard all day and was now hurrying home to rest.

“Addio, mia bella. Addio.”

“L’armata, se ne va.”

No one turns aside as he passes, or even glances in his direction. The gift of song is the glorious heritage of the Italian people. It is as natural to them to sing as it is to speak. But take these wild song birds and shut them up, and teach them scales and exercises, and most likely you will find the lovely, flexible voice all gone before the first difficulties are overcome.

Other music also filled these dark streets at times: the sound of mandolins, two or three together, with the accompaniment of a guitar, a few sweet chords struck together, or some popular air played by all.

As Christmas drew near and the Novena began, these walks at night were shortened: for Luigi was an earnest Roman Catholic, and was up almost with the dawn to find time for the service soon after seven at the Church of the Trinità.

Each church in Florence, during these days, is crowded in the early morning with the poor workers; the rough men and humble women,

to whom an hour spent in devotions means so many centimes less, and who can therefore fulfil this "obbligato" only by extra exertions, by rising earlier or sitting up later. Ah, what a difference there is between the ample leisure of the rich, and their careless prayers, and the hurried, hard-worked lives of the poor !

Christmas came, and the family were by this time almost rich. The biggest and fattest of fowls that could be bought for money, was theirs for the Christmas dinner. For Chiara, Luigi had bought some dark blue woollen material, soft and warm ; for Mimi there was a little horse in sugar, for which he had been longing for months. There was content and peace in that little household.

The New Year arrived, and everything went on for a time as before. But when spring began, with hot sunshine and cold winds, Mimi fell ill. He could no longer play about, but lay in a corner listless, with hot little hands and heavy eyes.

They nursed him with tender care, and at last carried him to a chemist's near, where a doctor called twice a week, to see all the poor patients who came. He said the child was weak, must have good wine and food. There was a little fever, but it would be nothing if he was cared for. But the days lengthened into weeks, and still Mimi was not well.

And now the time had come when all the strangers leave Florence ; spring was passing into summer. The hot weather came suddenly. At the end of May the city was empty. June set in with cloudless skies, and bright sunshine, but Mimi grew no stronger, and nightly it seemed that the audience at the Marionettes became smaller and smaller. Something must be done.

Luigi spent three hours printing in large letters, two inches long, an immense placard announcing that on the following Thursday there would be given, besides the ordinary performance, an original ballet with a dancer who would execute some steps the like of which had never been seen on any stage in Italy.

This placard was put up at the door of the little theatre, and then Luigi spent many an hour in practising with Mademoiselle Rosalie.

She stood on one toe, and advanced on this toe alone to the front of the stage ; she threw her arms into the most lovely attitudes ; in fact, she did all that a dancer could possibly accomplish. She was, at the end of five days, *enchante*. Then a new frock was got for her. A skirt of faintest blue, over it clouds of white, caught up here and there with rosebuds. Chiara's clever fingers made it, as well as the little wreath of rosebuds which adorned her head.

The day came. Mimi had been fretful all the night before, and when morning broke, fell into a heavy dose.

It was a blazing day, the 12th of June. There was much to do, as Luigi had dispensed with all assistance that could possibly be done without. At last everything was in order, and Chiara, pale, tired, and very fragile looking, stood at the door to take the money. Would

anyone come? Alas, alas! The hour came, there was quite a little crowd of ragged boys and men at the entrance, who had none of them a soldo in their pockets. Then two or three people came, and took the cheapest seats. Again they waited, unwilling to begin. An old man strayed in with two pretty girls. Is this all? They will wait five minutes more, and meanwhile, the man who beats the big drum at the door, redoubles his efforts. In vain. No one else appears.

How long that weary evening lasted, Chiara never could tell. When at last it was over, and Luigi was able to leave his post, he found her lying face downwards on the ground, worn out with fatigue and anxiety. The disappointment had proved too much for her.

Tenderly he raised her, and carried her into the poor little room at the back, where she lay on the bed, looking like a broken lily, the small face so white. With trembling hands he felt for her heart. Yes, it beats very faintly; she was not dead. But it was a long, long time before the heavy eyes opened, and when they did, they looked at him with a wide open stare, and with no recognition in them. Before morning a bright spot of crimson burnt in each cheek, and the little hands went straying about over the bed, as hot as fire. Chiara was in a high fever.

And now began a time of agony for Luigi. All day long his darling lay there, tossing to and fro, sometimes moaning, but never knowing who it was that put the cool rags on her forehead, or moistened the dry lips.

Poor little Mimi lay still and patient in his corner, and only the baby crawled about, and crowed, all unconscious of the misery around her. At night an old woman, who had known them all, and whose work was finished at sunset, came to sit in the room while Luigi managed the Marionettes; for if these ceased to perform, what was before them but starvation? And yet nightly the gains were so few—a handful of soldi, and no more. The doctor had come, and had again repeated his directions that Mimi was to have everything nourishing; while for Chiara, he shook his head, ordered ice on her head, wrote a long prescription, and begged that there might be some very strong soup always ready, so that, as soon as the fever abated, she might be induced to take a few spoonfuls of it.

IV.

It is July. The great heat of an Italian summer has fairly set in. The sun pours down in fierce, blinding rays all day long. From early dawn, until the sun has sunk below the horizon, it is scorchingly hot.

Just now, at midday, not a creature is to be seen in the great wide piazza, which looks like a blazing furnace; no shade anywhere; only the bright blue heavens above, and the broad white stones below reflecting the heat. Not even a dog to be seen.

On one side of the piazza is a large building, the windows of

which have all jealousies before them, now tightly closed. Inside, in a large bare looking studio, there is comparative coolness. A sort of twilight reigns. One makes out, after a moment's consideration, leaning against the wall, some large half-finished pictures. Close to one of the windows is an easel, and on it a canvas with roses—white, yellow, pink, and dark red—exquisitely painted. Looking at it stands the artist; while, leaning against the corner of the wall, is a young man with a cigar in his mouth. He takes it from between his lips, and turns to speak.

"Very well, mio Caro, you are as obstinate as a mule, and if you will have it so, nothing can move you. For my part, I tell you again, those roses are magnificent; but there is not enough repose in your picture this time. Too much incident—but listen. What is that; surely no visitor would come at this hour?"

There is a faint sound, a tinkle of a bell, then some slow, dragging steps up the wooden stairs—one, two, three, four—they stop, and there is a feeble knock.

The artist goes forward and opens the door. Upon the threshold stands a man, say rather a spectre, as he stands there in the half light. His large eyes, gleaming out of the pale, thin face, are made all the brighter by the deep blue lines round them. His figure is emaciated, his thin hands look almost like the hands of a skeleton, while great drops of weakness stand on his forehead.

A pitiful figure; and both the men gaze at it with curiosity and compassion.

He comes forward and speaks.

"Ah, Signori, for the love of Heaven, help me. My wife, my little Chiara, is dying, and I have nothing to give her. For days and days she has been lying in a fever. Have pity, and help my wife and my little ones, for we are starving. Oh, Signori, as you hope for Heaven yourselves, turn not away from my despair."

He stopped, fixing his eyes on the artist, with an agony of entreaty in his face.

Signor Cessi put aside his palette, came forward, and gently pushed Luigi into a chair.

"Now," he said, "my poor fellow, tell us what has happened, and if we can we will help you."

And then the sorrowful little tale was told. How failure had been followed by sickness, and sickness well nigh by despair; how one after the other all their small belongings had found their way to the Monte di Pietà. Every stick of furniture, except the bed on which Chiara lay. And now that everything that they possessed had been pawned for bread, except the Marionettes, Luigi had come forth to see if, in this great city, there existed one kind soul who would help them.

Fate, or, rather let us say, a Power much greater than Fate, led him into that quarter of the city. As he was crossing the great burning

piazza, he remembered having heard of a deed of kindness which Signor Cessi had performed; and taking courage at this had mounted the steps, with but a faint hope in his heart that he might find him in the studio. He was not disappointed. A little handful of silver was made up between the two artists, enough for that day's necessities, and more was promised; and then came a glorious promise for the future.

"I," said Signor Cessi, "will paint a drop-scene for your Marionettes, which shall bring all Florence to see it. And you, Tonio, shall help me. We will have a composition of yours in the centre. Yes; one of those mythological subjects you are so fond of; and I will paint the border."

So Luigi went away comforted and grateful; carrying with him, what is most precious to a human soul—hope, where such a little while before reigned despair.

The hot season has passed; the first gracious rain in September has fallen and cooled the thirsty, burning ground; the large purple grapes have swelled and ripened, and the vintage has come. Through the land there is a sound of rejoicing. Everywhere the grass and flowers are springing up. The days are exquisite, the atmosphere is clear as crystal, the heavens a most lovely blue, the sunshine golden. The sweet breezes which stir the vine leaves seem to call on everyone to come forth and be glad. Then when the sun, a golden globe, sinks behind the purple mountains, the stars shine out, and the night seems even more beautiful than the day.

A rumour has run through Florence, gaining ground each day. Signor Cessi, that pearl among artists, has painted a masterpiece: roses more lovely than any that have ever glowed upon canvas: and they are to be seen in the course of a day or two, on the drop-scene of the humble stage of the Marionettes!

"Where and when?" ask the multitude of idlers. And these questions are repeated and answered until there are crowds waiting for the opening night, when this marvellous work of art is first to be placed before the public.

At last the day arrives. The little open space before the theatre is packed by dark heads. Some of them have been waiting for hours. There is a murmur of expectation on every side; you hear the name repeated of Signor Cessi. You hear it in spite of the loud beating of the drum. At last the door is opened, the people pour in, a continual stream. It seems that in an instant the little theatre is crammed. Even the doorway is crowded.

Yes, there it hangs, resplendent, glorious. No words can describe the beauty of the flowers; they twine up on each side, and hang down again in lovely clusters. You could put out your hand and pluck those roses fresh with dew. The picture in the middle is full of merit, the composition is capital, and the execution all that could be desired; but it is on the roses alone that everyone's eyes are fixed.

Crisp, exquisite, the shadows transparent, with lovely, pearly shades. Each pink rose seems to emit light from itself. It is a poem in flowers, and no other hand in the world could have painted it.

There is a murmur of applause, hushed only at last by the raising of the drop scene. But it is this and this alone that the crowds have come to see—not the Marionettes. And night after night it is the same. There is not room in the theatre for the crowds who pour in.

A Russian prince sends for Luigi. He offers him ten thousand francs for the drop scene.

“Eccellenza,” he replies, hat in hand : “if you gave me its weight in gold pieces I would never part with it. It has saved our lives. But for the man who painted it, we should have died of hunger. God has blessed his work and brought us out of our despair. I will keep it for ever.”



BETROTHAL SONG.

As he who the dead night through unhappy watches and wakes,
And is glad of the pallid surf where the first wave of morning breaks,
As he long pent in a dungeon is glad of the first free breath,
As he who is tortured with living is glad of the promise of death,
As he who is weary to sickness is glad of the ceasing of strife,
I am glad of the thought of your presence, of your feet in the ways
of my life !

As autumn weeps for the summer, and night grieves after the day,
As age reaches arms back to youth, and December thrusts hands out
to May,
As all that is sad and unloved desires all that is happy and dear,
As all that is stormy and dark loves all that is quiet and clear,
As despair yearns back for a life burnt out at an idol's feet,
My heart yearns passionate after whenever you leave me, Sweet !

As the world, with its broken lives, hopes ever, for ever longs
For a new bright life that shall lighten its darkness and right its
wrongs,
As the starlight dreams of the moon, as the moonlight dreams of the
sun,
So I dream of the day that is coming, when I and my heart shall be
one :
When you who are one with my heart, with all of its pleasure and
pain,
Shall be one with my life for ever, and never leave me again !

E. NESBIT.

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.

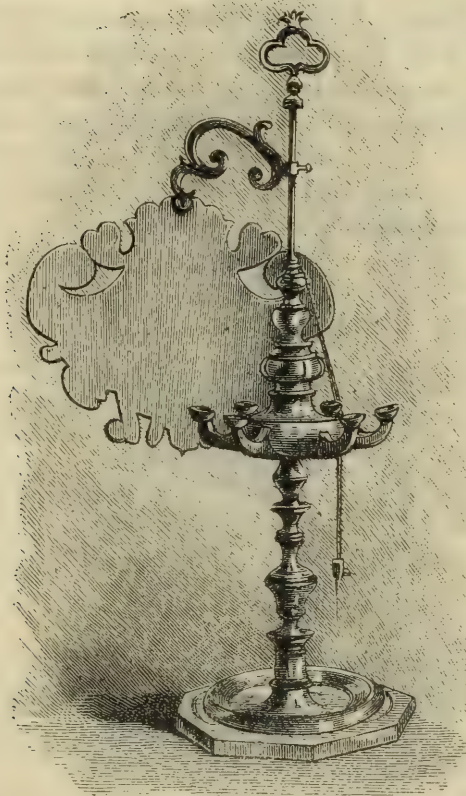
Palma, November 14, 1886.

MY DEAR E.—"Les jours se suivent et se ressemblent." But this is hardly true of our life in this Palma de Mallorca.

Palma de Mallorca. I am never tired of pronouncing these words, of writing them, or of hearing them spoken. The syllables, soft and liquid, flow musically as the murmur of a stream. Mallorca, too, has a more Southern, more poetical sound than our harder English *Majorca*, and inclines one to its adoption in future letters. It is also the correct word: you will look in vain for *Majorca* in any foreign atlas: and correctness in small things insures corresponding accuracy in life's greater events.

"Les jours se suivent et se ressemblent." A saying that has passed into a proverb, with its burden of sadness. Who first wrote it must have been weary of life; at any rate, at that instant of time; for nothing is more certain than that the mind is elastic, and the heart quickly rebounds, and the sorrow of one hour may be turned into the joy of the next. Few memories are so tenacious, few hearts so faithful, that the glow of a great happiness or the gloom of a great grief, will influence all the future life. For the generality of mankind this is well. The few exceptions, with their greater capacities for suffering and rejoicing, are those who more often than not might have recorded upon their tombstone the short and comprehensive epitaph: *Miserrimus*.

"Les jours se suivent et se ressemblent." One can fancy it echoed by some prisoner in the old Bastille, his only visitors the mice who daily come to be fed from his hand. Or by a Napoleon at



St. Helena, with weighty memories sapping the very springs of life. And under such circumstances they bear a double meaning.

Who has not pictured to himself that solitary figure on a distant island, with firmer chains about his soul than the iron links that restrain the liberty of a convict? Growing sadder and more hopeless as not only the days but the years followed and resembled each other so closely. Looking out seawards with despairing gaze from early dawn to dewy eve; seeing in imagination far off lands where battles had been fought and triumphs won, and, like Alexander, he almost sighed for fresh worlds to subdue; a world, indeed, of which he was all but the master, invariably going forth conquering and to conquer: until the hour and the man arose who broke the charm of his successes and turned the current of his life for ever.

But in this Palma de Mallorca our days have in them a certain amount of variety, and we are by no means weary of existence. Which I will not deceive you, as the renowned Mrs. Gamp said to her partner in wickedness, Mrs. Prig: we are even greatly enjoying ourselves in a quiet, harmless way.

We even date forward with a certain dread to a time when all this must pass away, and we shall leave this bright town and island and atmosphere, and embark with a cargo of Mallorcan pigs for Spain, en route for England, and the attendant horrors of an English winter. However, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may:" let us not anticipate. Perhaps before the end of our stay we shall have decided to pitch our future tent here and cast in our lot with the Mallorcans!

Only yesterday I wrote to you, and yet to-day has not been at all spent as we spent yesterday. My last letter might be described as an indoor record; this will rather be an outdoor summary of small chronicles. So, at least, I imagine, for nothing is more certain than that the pen rules me, and not I the pen. I simply follow its lead.

I have already warned you that this is a dreamy place, with a certain lotus influence about it, making one not quite responsible for the course of events, or any eccentricity of conduct. With the Mallorcans it develops into a certain sluggish inactivity, which causes them to act rather like the Turks in the East. They, you know, take things very calmly and quietly: fold their hands and cross their legs, and accept with equal indifference what life brings or takes away, rather than attempt by a little energy to overcome circumstances.

Perhaps the Turk goes further than the Mallorcan; for he quietly squats upon the ground, allows the roof of his house to fall in, and, while watching the ruins with sleepy eyes, calls upon Mahomet to bear witness to the wreck. "Allah! Il Allah!" he cries. "Let it be so. Why build it up again, since it is written that we are to pass away?"

The Mallorcan is not at all as bad as this. His house is kept in order, roof in repair, ground cultivated, though he might do more

in this matter. Lastly, he drives a great trade in pigs. This, of necessity, stirs him up; for, if you do not master your pigs, they will certainly master you. Like a refractory patient or an ill-trained mind, they require constant discipline and close watching.

Nevertheless, the Mallorcan has no real enterprise, as I am led to believe. Some progress he must make, because the tendency of the whole world is towards progress. But the Mallorcan's progress is merely one of degrees. What was good enough in the past, will do for the present.

In our daily life here there are, of course, certain events that do resemble and repeat each other. Such, for instance, as my daily trouble with H. C., who would like to spend all his hours in church, studying fair penitents. Such as the fine phrenzies of his poetic moods, which are by no means diminishing, as I had fondly hoped.

Only this morning he came in, and, with a wild stare, said that, during the night, he had composed five-and-twenty fourteen-syllabled ten-lined stanzas, and entitled them "Rhymes of Rheims." He gave it the English pronunciation, and I asked him quite innocently if he hadn't got rather mixed, and meant "*Reams of Rhymes*."

He cast me one look in reply. I trembled.

Then he began to spout, with tragic action and melodramatic tone, his five-and-twenty fourteen-syllabled ten-lined stanzas. He declaimed: "Rheims! Rheims! Oh, Rheims!"

I felt my brain going, and parodied out with appropriate tone and action: "Reams! Reams! Oh, Reams!"

He gave me another look. I disappeared. Discretion is the better part of valour. "He who fights and runs away, will live to fight another day."

I suddenly remembered that I wanted some blotting-paper, left my breakfast untasted upon the table, and went off. I bought three sheets of it, *par parenthèse*, for which they charged me the advanced price of fourteen pence.

When I returned, will you believe that he had taken a very mean revenge? To quote again the renowned Mrs. Gamp, I would not have debased myself by such a proceeding. He had not only consumed his own portion of pastry, but mine also; eaten both rolls, and drunk up all the coffee. I was worse off than Mrs. Hubbard's dog. But I had the consolation of seeing that he looked really very ill and uncomfortable, and that the fine phrenzy of the poet's mood had merged into a state of comatose. I couldn't help declaiming:

"Rolls! Rolls! Oh, Rolls! how fondly I would keep you!
But base revenge stept in, and now I weep you!"

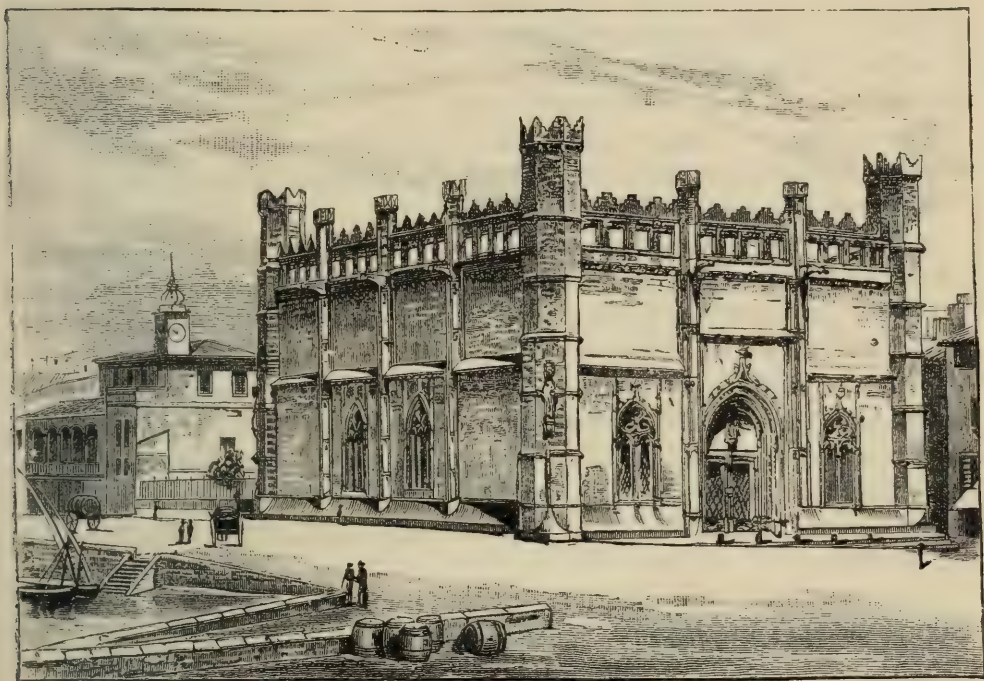
Of course, I don't pretend to be a poet, and this was very inferior to H. C.'s fine flights of fancy: but, good or bad, it had no effect upon him; he was too far gone.

I had another breakfast brought up, and H. C. revived miraculously,

with the poetic glare I have learned to dread. He looks at you evidently without seeing you. You have an uncomfortable feeling of being transparent, and that he is looking through you into infinite space.

I never had this feeling of transparency communicated to me except once in the drawing-room of Madame Moscheles, whose beautiful white head for me is surrounded by a halo, because she was the friend of Mendelssohn.

There I met a lady I had never seen before, who told fate, fortune and character by the lines in the hand ; told my past and present so accurately that I trembled lest all the weaknesses and indiscretions of my nature should be brought to light. Either these were not



THE LONJA.

recorded, or she was merciful. She also revealed my future, but that I keep to myself. It contained some lovely bits, which I will not spoil by anticipation.

One other fortune or fate she "cast," that of a young man who played the piano marvellously, and seemed altogether a very original character.

Our soothsayer was a very Sybil. Before five minutes were over I watched him turn pale. Two minutes more, and he withdrew his hand altogether. "It is too strong," he said, translating the French expression into English. "You tell me what no one on earth knows but myself. I cannot let you go on. You are exposing my life."

He seemed really alarmed. The Sybil : a charming, delicate woman, with pale, quiet face and calm manners : replied that she could only disclose what his hand taught her : and the séance ended.

It had only been a sort of entr'acte in a recess, amongst our three selves, between the intervals of some very delightful music. She appeared thoroughly in earnest, and an absolute believer in the art. We have never chanced to meet again ; but some day in this narrow world we shall do so ; and then I shall ask her for a second Interpretation.

There are people who believe firmly in this science of palmistry, as it is called. It is, as the Scotch would say, uncanny. Less distant, it seems almost as mysterious and unfathomable as the science of astrology. The Wise Men of the East believed in this in their day ; perhaps the wise men of the West are also advancing.

It makes one slightly uncomfortable. If we thus carry about us a record of our lives, our destinies must be fixed as the course of the stars. Man must needs become a fatalist : no longer a free agent, with will of his own to do or not to do.

This we know is impossible ; therefore how reconcile these hand-revelations one hears so much of with the fact that there are two paths in life, and man may choose either ?

Is it all chance, all guess work ? A happy circumstance : like the few successful prophecies that made the fortunes of the old almanacs, and gave their owners an enviable distinction that would have burnt or drowned them two hundred years ago ?

Or is man really learning to interpret secrets never meant to be known, and to read a future wisely hidden from all ? For who would have courage to face his future if it were spread out before him in characters that he might read, mark and learn ?

I know nothing about it, and leave wiser heads than mine to solve the problem.

What led to this digression ? I think it was H. C. in a fine phrenzy, looking through me into space, as if I were transparent. Thus would I be in all my dealings with my fellow-men ; but to be looked through and through in other ways is never physically comfortable, and not always morally convenient.

A fresh supply of breakfast came up, and I had great difficulty in preventing the Grasp of Greed from appropriating, a second time, my frugal fare.

For all that, I saw that he was in one of his most exalted, therefore most troublesome, phases ; and I felt that a counter-irritant would be necessary.

It was market day, and my "crumbs of comfort" snatched from the very clutches of avarice, and happily disposed of, I suggested a walk to this very interesting and delectable thoroughfare. I must say he is very good. With all his fine phrenzies and star apostrophes, and architectural disquisitions, I have never yet proposed anything that he has not at once seconded. This is a great virtue in a travelling companion, when responsiveness is everything. So for the market we started.

Here, you will say, was prosiness enough ; and you will feel inclined to laugh at our "going to market," like the Pretty Maid in the rhyme ; though, by the way, I never could see that it *did* rhyme.

I assure you, you would be wrong. There are markets and markets, just as there are people and people : some who are born handsome, and others who have the misfortune to be—the opposite. Charlotte Brontë was quite right ; ugliness is a great misfortune. But nature is merciful ; it is the plain people who as a rule are vain of their good looks. This is no greater mystery than it is a fact. You will have noticed, too, that people to whom nature has withheld her charms, are the very people who dress most conspicuously and in the worst taste.

But to be surrounded by good looks and refined faces, and gentle, delicate ways, and sweet voices—what an amazing difference this makes to one's life. If it be a weakness, I plead guilty to it, and have no wish to be absolved from it.

All this does not apply to Palma, where there is very little evidence of bad taste, and where both men and women are often singularly favoured and attractive.

I am told that this prepossessing type is peculiar to Palma, and does not by any means extend to the other parts of Mallorca. The only other exception is Felanitx, said to be famous for its pretty girls. I intend to visit Felanitx, not in the least for my own edification, but that I may have the pleasure of informing you as to the correctness of this statement.

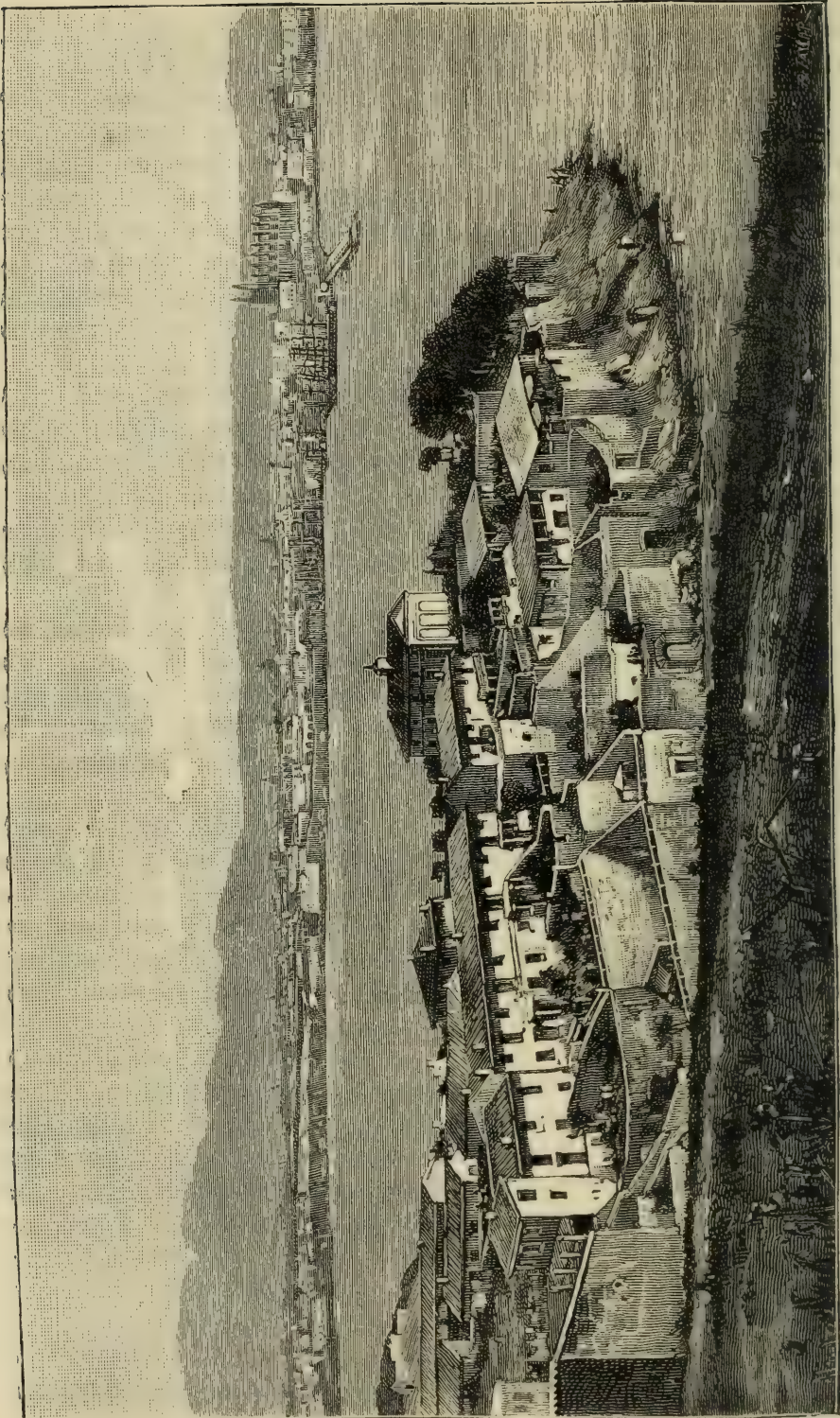
In Palma many of the people have refined and delicate faces, well-carved, chiselled features, often a pale olive complexion. They are usually dark, with liquid eyes and well-marked brows and raven hair—if such a thing exists. The women, as I have told you, are graceful—the men well made, straight and supple. They walk well, too, and do not, like most Englishmen, point their toes and come down heel first.

I have my daily task with H.C., who persists in visiting the churches during "les Offices," not at all from devout motives. There is sure to be a houri somewhere, bent in what I have already called picturesque devotion, and he plants himself against a pillar, gazes, and sighs away his heart-blood, and composes those reams of rhymes that will shortly exhaust all the MS. paper in the island. If I were not there to save him from himself, I believe there would be nothing left but the wreck of a brilliant intellect and a candidate for Bedlam to take back to England.

It is fortunate that these frailties and follies are all on the side of Telemachus, and that he has so sedate a Mentor as his refuge and safeguard.

But to the market. You will say we are a long time on the road to this desired haven.

In truth it is not easy to pass quickly through the streets of Palma.



PALMA.

Some fresh feature for ever strikes one. A new court, not hitherto discovered, with beautiful pillars and fine arches, a dignified staircase and exquisitely-wrought ironwork. Distracting ecstasies ensue, playing havoc with the tenth Commandment, and almost persuading you to forget your "Duty to your Neighbour," which prohibits picking and stealing. This, perhaps, is not often "broken in the keeping"; can we say as much for the other clauses in that long and difficult portion of the compilation, which caused our childhood more tears in the learning than I fear to the breaking our manhood has given sighs?

Or perhaps a singular balcony, with wonderful ironwork of chaste design, not before noticed, suddenly arrests our gaze. Or the Gothic ornamentation of some old house; or a fine mediæval doorway; or a church porch standing open, and inviting one to enter and study form and symmetry in the attitude of a picturesque penitent.

The shops, too, possess some interest, more on account of those who serve than of what they display. Of bric-à-brac shops there are few left, and one of these few is kept by a policeman, who parades the town in uniform and stick, is as harmless but less noisy than the watchman, and has nothing to do.

Here we have been lucky enough to meet with one of the old Palma lamps, of which I enclose you a sketch.

It is quite a Mallorcan feature. Composed of brass, it has six burners, is classical in form, and has a screen which may be used as a reflector or a shade.

These lamps burn oil, and the wicks are kept in order by a small pair of pincers hanging from a chain. Another chain bears an extinguisher. In Palma they use olive oil, because it is cheapest. The light is the loveliest, purest, whitest you can imagine.

The first time we saw one we were going down a narrow street, and, in the gathering gloom, a woman crossed a courtyard holding this lighted lamp. Everything was so much in keeping that we were charmed. The ancient vestibule, with its pillars and arches and ironwork; the woman, with flowing garments, and mantilla hastily thrown upon her head; this classical lamp: all harmonized as if they had been made for each other. A picture not to be found elsewhere; a chance effect, stamped vividly upon the imagination.

Of course we immediately longed to be the possessors of one. Fortune favoured us. Our policeman, who has no prisoners to capture, had captured a lamp. Deeds of darkness failing him, he turns to those of light.

They are ancient these lamps, and are not reproduced, as I am told. All these assertions I accept in faith. This lamp bears every evidence of age, and must be genuine. Besides that, I have too much confidence in the integrity of a Mallorcan policeman to doubt him for a moment. The lamps are also of different sizes, and the smaller, with one or two burners, are almost more classical in form than those with five or six. They remind one of ancient Rome and the "Last

Days of Pompeii," though why of the last days only, I hardly know. But you can almost fancy that you see Nydia, the blind girl, hurrying through the street with just such another in her hand.

Palma was once a great place for picking up genuine bric-à-brac and all kinds of curiosities : old glass, carved and inlaid furniture, majolica ware. Much of this came from the houses of the nobles, who were gradually reducing their collections. Those days have departed. Everything worth having has been appropriated.

It has been a matter of dispute as to whether or not Majolica ware first came from Mallorca. As in most matters of history, there is doubt and division upon the subject. The verdict seems now to be given rather against Mallorca. Be this as it may, there is a very fine collection of Majolica scattered about the island ; not, alas, for sale, but in the possession of those who know how to value and retain it.

This bric-à-brac repository is not far from our tea shop, which has really become our consolation. Here I buy tea, and H. C. goes in extensively for jam. The first day we entered and asked for a supply of tea, the master informed us that it was so much an ounce. Would we take an ounce or two ounces.

We would take a pound. The man stared, staggered, fell into a trance. Finally he recovered, took up paper and pencil, put down so many separate ounces, made his calculation, and brought out the sum total at six shillings. We cheerfully paid it. This is moderate for tea abroad, where it is generally much better than in England. The cheap teas of the English market are ruining the constitution of the country. I would sooner take slow poison than your cheap English teas.

We gained much of our intimate knowledge of these shops the day we sallied forth in search of a tea-making apparatus. Everywhere the people were good, patient and civil, though we spoke like Irving in an unknown tongue, and interpreted chiefly by signs which did *not* produce wonders. And when we did not buy because what they had suited not our purpose, they seemed more genuinely sorry for our disappointment than for their own.

This is as it should be. One likes to feel that, after all, there is a great deal of good in human nature ; a substratum of earnest purpose in many an apparently frivolous exterior.

Only this morning I experienced a kindly action.

I was on my way to the post office, to consign your letter amongst others to the uncertainties of the Spanish mails. Suddenly a shower came on and rain descended heavily.

I took refuge in the shop at the corner of the steps leading to our original acquaintance, the photographer. This establishment was more in your line than in mine, for it contained frills, flounces and furbelows ; delicate laces and refined arrangements in white for neck and sleeves, of which I appreciate the effect without knowing their classical name.

The master of these airy, fairy substances came forward with enviable grace, and gave me a chair. Of course he could see that I was not a customer, but a refugee. Gentlemen do not wear frills and flounces, except in pantomimes and private theatricals. As he knew some little French, and I have picked up a few, very few words of Mallorcan, a lively conversation ensued. To a listener, the mixture of tongues and gestures, and the totally new words created, would have been edifying.

The rain continued to descend, and he offered me an umbrella with unstudied politeness.

If you visit a Spaniard, he will place his whole house at your disposal. If you admire anything in particular, or everything in general, it is yours. You are not expected to accept it, and if from ignorance or absence of mind you do so, you will find that presently he will send for it back again. Nothing is more certain than that in Spain, a friend will offer you everything he has, himself into the bargain; and it is equally certain that everything has to be graciously declined, himself included.

But when this Good Samaritan offered me an umbrella, it was meant to be taken in good part. It would certainly have been put to the test, had our conversation not outlasted the rain. He seemed disappointed, evidently wishing to make an occasion for a second visit and a second French conversation. He was good enough to say that it was a lesson to him, who was forgetting his French for want of exercise.

Yet, though I have no umbrella to return, I mean to indulge him and honour myself by another call, knowing that it will give pleasure.

And in a town where ninety-nine people out of every hundred one meets speak only an unknown tongue, you cannot imagine the pleasure one also receives in meeting the hundredth, with whom it is possible to exchange civilized thoughts in the ordinary way.

But to the market—for I am anticipating. The above incident happened after we had paid our visit, and when H. C. had settled himself for sketching, with a congregation of curious gazers at his elbow.

On our way to this market, in a narrow but picturesque street, paved with petrified cobbles, we came upon a shrew.

A grand dispute was going on, and the noise and commotion might have been heard from pavement to dome of St. Paul's Cathedral or St. Peter's at Rome. An admiring crowd was gathered round the small doorway. A flight of stairs leading to the first floor was lined with women, of whom our shrew and spokeswoman was leader. A young woman and an old one, in the doorway, were evidently plaintiffs in this trial by female jury: which is as much as to say that prejudice, not right, weighted the scales of justice.

Our sympathies were all in favour of the young woman. She was pretty; neatly dressed, with a coquettish hood that set off her pale

features : whether pale from emotion or by nature, one could not tell. Animated as the shrew, but not so loud, she gave way to tears that would have softened even a Mallorcan pavement. The shrew—old, ugly, and substantial—had a visage inflamed by vindictive passions.

The younger woman had a large basket with her, and evidently belonged to the market. Something had gone wrong there. The shrew had cheated her, or threatened murder, or prophesied ill-luck, or declared that her lover would be faithless—a moral impossibility, with such a face and form. Whatever the grievance, the girl was in despair ; wept freely, wrung her hands, appealed publicly for justice and protection.

We did not wait the end. H. C. impulsively dashed forward, and was about to put a violent termination to the shrew's existence, when I forcibly dragged him away. She richly deserved the severest doom. Boiling over a slow fire was what we should have preferred ; a process, I believe, by cooks called *simmering*. It would have been lovely to gently simmer her to death ; but the consequences to us might have been inconvenient.

As we went off, we were greeted with a noise exactly resembling the squabble you have so often heard in "*Faust*," when girls and men rush on the stage and a pitched battle ensues between the opposing factions. I have always noticed, by the way, that on these occasions the women are always much more ferocious than the men ; much cleverer and more active with their hands and arms. I have an idea that this little bit of acting is very true to life.

The market at last.

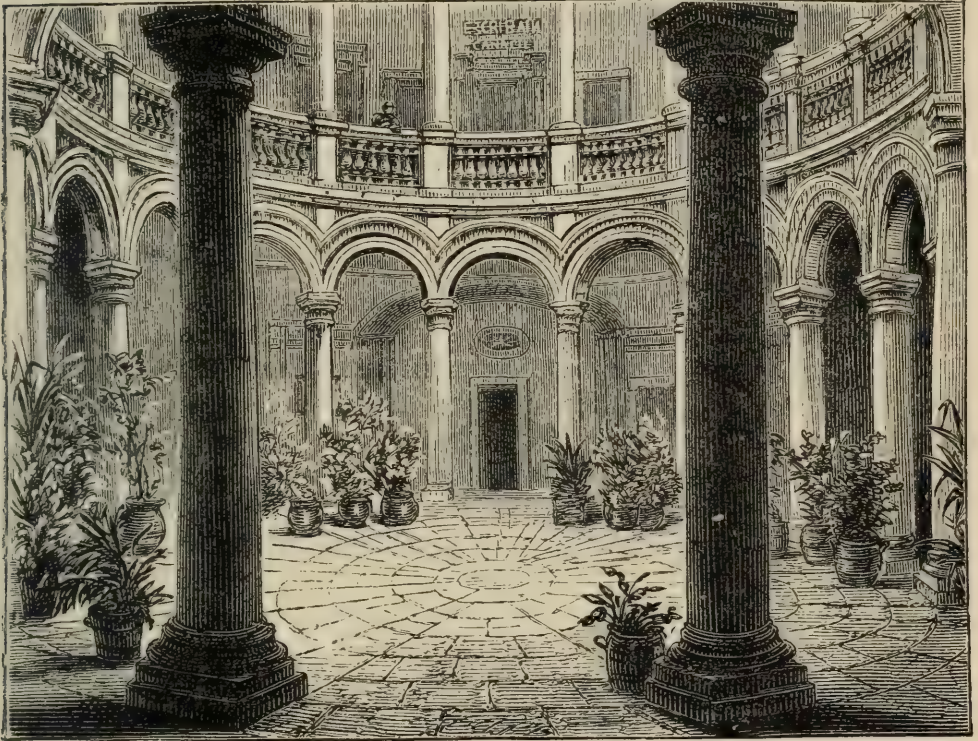
It was crowded with stalls, with buyers and sellers. A great noise was going on. Foreigners can do nothing without noise, which is their keynote of life. They know nothing of "*indoor*" voices. Who gives out most sound, makes most way. You must confound your opponent by this power of sound much more than by argument. An Irishman has faith in a broken head, and will be convinced by this when nothing else would persuade him. But the Spaniards and Mallorcans, whilst even more noisy, happily, as far as I can see and learn, stop short of bloodshed.

The market is held in an ancient square, surrounded by heavy arcades. Everything necessary to human sustenance is sold here. The meat market had no attractions, and we passed it by. The fruit and vegetable market more than charmed us. The latter was picturesque with a variety of brilliant colours ; its Indian corn, profusion of tomatoes—*pommes d'amour*, as the French poetically call them—and large red capsicums. Tomatoes were a penny a pound, and this will give you some idea of prices in general. We were solicited on all hands to buy ; but disappointment, coupled with admiration, followed in our wake.

It was different in the fruit market. Here we found great treasures and abundance of temptation.

The grapes I have already mentioned, and we did not scruple to throw dignity to the winds and make much of our opportunity. Bags were at a premium, and we had occasionally to put up with cabbage leaves. But what mattered, in a place where we were unknown, and had only the gaze of the natives to confound us? It is one of the charms of Mallorca that so long as you do not break the Commandments, or set the Catechism at defiance, you may do what you will.

H. C. carried the spoils, and was very careful that—to quote for the third time the inevitable Mrs. Gamp—I should eat fair of the



THE OVAL CLOISTERS.

fruit that she preferred in the more liquid form. But you will not be surprised to hear that he acted Mrs. Prig on this occasion, who, in absence of mind, replenished her cup too often. This dissolved their friendship: ours fortunately exists on a sounder basis.

One man had a stall of pomegranates, large, red, luscious. These he was selling at a halfpenny each. An honest man, too, for when we wanted to pay him a trifle more than his charge, for a slight service rendered, he put back the coin into our hands.

He dexterously opened the pomegranates and prepared them in the most convenient form for eating, thoroughly enjoying our appreciation of the fruit and of his cleverness. Apples and oranges also abounded; and though the oranges were scarcely ripe, they gave out an exquisite flavour and perfume unknown to England.

It was a very animated scene, though not exactly one of pomp and pageantry. The crowd was actively employed, each doing his best for himself and his household. The air was full of sound. It seemed to vibrate about our ears.

The arcades threw over all a quaint, old-world look. From windows above them people looked down upon the stir and bustle. One of the houses is a Palma hotel; but I should hardly care to patronize any room or inn overlooking the market.

For after a certain hour, crowds diminish, buyers and sellers disappear, stalls are deserted until next morning or next market day; the emptiness is formal and depressing.

It is ever thus with all places where crowds congregate: inevitable contrast and reaction. Empty spaces are peopled with ghosts, reminding one forcibly of a day when we too must find our chair empty, our place filled by another; content, it may be, if we live in the remembrance even of one heart. If only one glance kindle, one pulse beat more quickly at the recollection of the touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still. If even one hand will lay its tribute of affection on our tomb when by all else in the coming years we are remembered no more.

So you see that our visit to the market was not a case of "Love's Labour Lost," but would bear frequent repetition. H. C. at once plunged into poetry, inspired even by the unfermented juice of the grape; but on this occasion I spare you. In fact, my memory fails me. His flight was too exalted, the scene too remote. Nothing less than Olympus, where he mixed up gods and mortals, fruits and flowers, nectar and ambrosia, in great bewilderment and utter disrespect.

After this, H. C. went off to sketch an old corner bit he had rather fallen in love with; a picturesque building, which holds what looks like a town well or reservoir. But before reaching it we came upon another wonderful court, or rather set of cloisters, and were amazed at their beauty.

H. C. abandoned the idea of the old well on the spot, and began to work away at the cloisters.

They are oval, with wonderful pillars and arches in the Renaissance style. Half way up, a gallery runs round them, leading to various habitations and a small church or chapel. The pavement was enlivened by flowers and evergreens in earthenware jars. They probably date back to about the sixteenth century—the cloisters, not the evergreens—and we felt, indeed, far removed from the present time while gazing upon these records of a past age. But the enclosed sketch will give you a better idea of them than any description of mine. You will observe the beautiful pillars supporting the round arches, but you cannot realize the perfect oval of the court, and its singular look of age and refinement.

On our way, we passed the Town Hall. It is one of the remarkable

buildings of Palma, chiefly by reason of its overhanging eaves of wonderfully carved wood.

The carving hardly shows to advantage. You have to strain upwards, and the light and glare of the intense sun, and the bright blue of the sky, dazzle one's vision. What Dante calls the "devastating dust of time," has also partly obscured the devices; the dark tones here and there look powdered and faded. As far as one could see, the subjects were representations of Plenty and Abundance, symbolized even by the goddesses, who looked very Rubens-like in their amplitude. But I have never seen carving so massive or so magnificent.

The interior is also remarkable. You enter a large hall, with an oak ceiling boldly carved in squares, with deep mouldings. The ceiling looks as if it would defy time itself. It is dark and brown as the oldest mahogany.

Beyond it is a room given over to municipal and other business, hung round with pictures, some of which are good, and others good for nothing. One especially of St. Sebastian wriggling in the agonies of torture struck us, not sadly as it ought to have done, but humourously as it ought not to have done.

I believe this is attributed to a great master; and if so, I am quite sure the shade of the great master will haunt the building until they have done him restitution. It is just the place for a ghost, with great, dark, mysterious-looking rooms and a certain severe atmosphere.

Upstairs are the rooms where the Town Council sit, and where, for aught I know, judges deliver judgment. This is not at all the same Inquisitorial Council who impounded H. C. and threatened him with death and destruction. Chairs are placed in large horse-shoe form around a throne-like erection. Many portraits line the walls and many eyes look mournfully down upon the empty seats. They seem to say:

"Ev'n as we have had our day,
This also must pass away."

Some are monarchs and some are simple men; but a story hangs by each. They all seem to have fought out life's battle bravely and made themselves famous.

They are enlivened, too, by a few women, who also made unto themselves a name, not by deeds of valour, probably, but by religious fervour and a consistent life. And when we remember that it is easier to die the death of a martyr than to live the life of a saint, this means heroism quite as much as the bravery which distinguishes a man on the battle-field.

Behind the building is a small court or garden. It is beautiful by reason of its trees and shrubs, which, in the sunlight throw out dancing shadows upon the white walls.

This garden is only a few feet square—or rather a few feet of a triangle; but after the depressing gloom of the ghostly rooms, the

little vision of green, the sunshine, and the dancing shadows, are intensely refreshing. Of course it has a well : what court in Palma, however small, has not : and this well, reposing under the shadow of spreading branches, is as necessarily picturesque.

We first came upon this garden yesterday, never before having ventured quite so far into the building. One is always haunted by a fear of intrusion, which, no doubt, diminishes one's courage, and causes one to lose many an object of interest and beauty.

We were at once struck with our discovery, and after revelling in it for five minutes, a bright idea struck us. We would here take each other's photograph. With two such interesting objects in the foreground, the background would make a perfect picture. We might carry away with us a souvenir and reminiscence to look at in years to come, when we had grown old and grey headed.

No sooner said than done. We went straight off to the hotel, took up our paraphernalia, and departed.

Our division of labour is thus :

H. C. carries the heavy leather box slung across his shoulders, by reason of his superior strength, whilst he condescendingly allows me to bear the tripod—a weight that would scarcely disturb a butterfly's wing. This is as much as I can manage ; and I have an idea that H. C. inwardly exults at his superiority over me in this respect ; does his best to suppress a feeling of contempt for my want of muscular power. It is, alas ! too true that, if I carried a volume to the end of the street, my arm would ache for hours afterwards ; whilst to carry the leathern box as far as the Town Hall, would deprive me of three days' growth.

But Nature has her compensations, and, in strength of character and moral purpose, I am as superior to H. C. as the stars are above the earth. It is true, you do not know him, and cannot realize this ; and should you ever chance to meet, I beseech you not to wound his feelings by such a revelation : for he has laid to his soul the flattering unction of superiority over me in every respect.

“ Oh wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels' as ithers see us.”

But I don't agree with Burns. The consequence of this would be that we should all go through the world dumb images of despair. Far better go on in our “ blunders and foolish notions ; ” thinking well of ourselves if our consciences will allow it ; thinking better of our neighbours, if their reputation permits us this charity.

Well, we started with our usual division of labour, H. C. shouldering the box with that amount of fervour and display, in themselves a sort of silent reproach ; and I meekly following with the tripod.

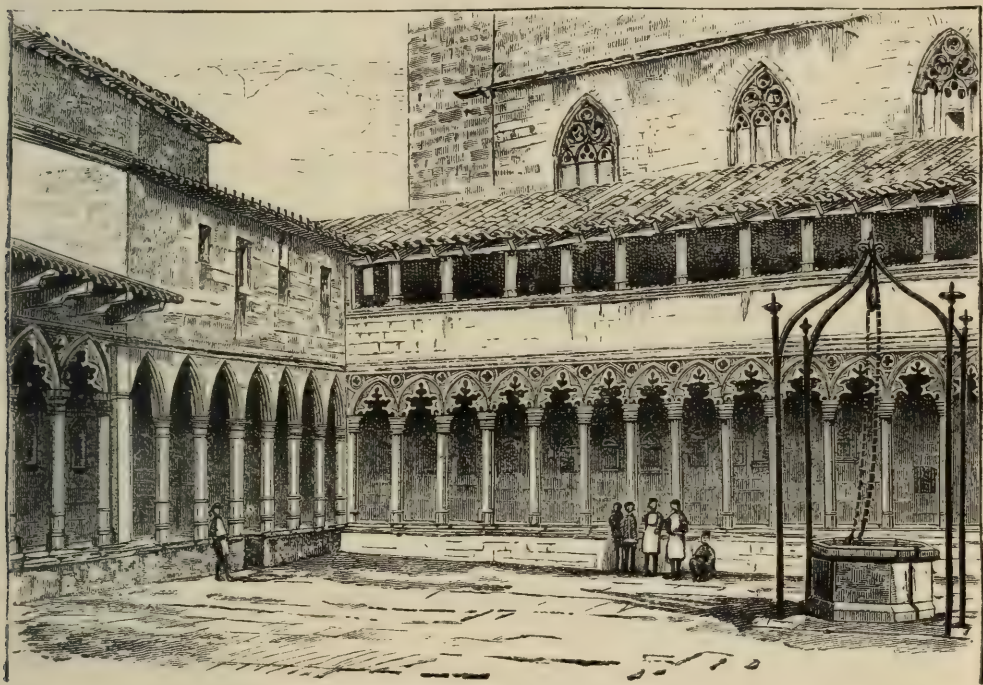
Antonio in the next room was simultaneously raising a cloud of dust and his usual novel, wild, unearthly echoes, which might be distinctly heard not only in the remotest recesses of the opposite

club, but almost in the quaint courtyard of the ancient castle of Belver itself.

He came out and looked after us as we went down, speculation in his gaze. He unbosomed himself to Francisco yesterday, and confessed that he was much exercised in mind ; had never come across similar travellers "companying" with cameras ; could not decide whether we were noblemen in disguise, ordinary English gentlemen, afflicted with a mania, or itinerant photographers pure and simple.

This is the penalty one has to pay for the least thing done out of the ordinary way.

We reached the little garden. The custodian of the Town Hall,



PRISON CLOISTERS.

in uniform and brass buttons, came to us, ascertained that our box contained no dynamite or other explosive substance, and very kindly left us to follow our pleasure.

We set up the camera, took infinite pains in the focussing, admired and congratulated each other upon the general effect ; and the sittings—or rather standings—triumphantly concluded. We at once carried the plates to our right-hand man in Palma—the original and obliging photographer, who does not now appear upon the scene for the first time.

He, by the way, is the most delightfully trusting being you can imagine ; allows me to choose and take away everything I like ; never examines what I put aside ; allows no payment ; but says : "By-and-by, before you leave, we can settle our differences." I have many of his views by me ; but whether I have ten, or whether I have fifty, he knows not, and seems quite happy in his ignorance.

To him we took our plates. He promised to develop and have them printed by the evening.

At eight o'clock we went down. His look was comical, but he said not a word as he placed the proofs before us.

What do you think had happened? All had come out as perfectly as possible, but we had no heads; absolutely no heads whatever. Had we been decapitated for high treason, and then sat for our portraits, they could not have come out more satisfactorily.

It was a mystery then, and it is a mystery now. My own opinion was, and is still, that the ghost of the great master that haunts the Town Hall had never before found anything worth running away with, seized upon this favourable opportunity, and carried off our heads. I admire his taste and judgment. Perhaps, after this, he would even think himself sufficiently recompensed for defamation of character, and would cease to haunt the building: an excellent way of laying a ghost.

It was, however, only resting one troubled spirit to raise two others. We were really confounded that both our heads should have mysteriously disappeared without rhyme or reason, whilst all else about the portraits was perfection. As for our photographer, after significantly enquiring whether we had taken each other before lunch or after (he knew well enough, since he had had them in hand by ten o'clock) he confessed himself equally unable solve the mystery.

This took place yesterday. We have not again had courage to take each other, and I doubt if we shall ever renew the attempt. The next time we might disappear altogether.

This afternoon we had another curious experience: nothing less than a visit to the prison. If ever it should be my fate to transgress the laws of my country and lose my liberty, may I find myself an inmate of the prison at Palma.

We were told that it would be hard to obtain admission. This was true in one sense. We wandered up and down, but could find no entrance. At length I went up to an officer in military uniform who chanced to be passing, addressed him in French, and made known our dilemma. I was fortunate. He replied fluently in the same language, and was at once all kindness and courtesy. We were quite a hundred yards out of our latitude, and he volunteered to be our guide.

Presently we came to a small door we had passed several times in contempt. He knocked; the custodian opened, and bowed down without question. Our guide was evidently one in authority, though he had nothing to do with the prison. We were admitted to the most ancient and beautiful of Gothic cloisters. You could not imagine anything more refined in the way of architecture. Their form was quadrangular and very perfect: the cloisters of an ancient monastery belonging to the Church of San Francisco, which, with its one tower, rises on the north side. This tower is an old minaret, dating back to the days of the Moors, and bears therefore a special interest.

The cloisters are the recreation ground of the prisoners, who were scattered about, and had no objection to be looked at. Some of them approached us and returned the compliments of our gaze ; not at all rudely, but curiously, as if our visit were a slight break or distraction in the monotony of their lives. No doubt it was so. People seldom visit the prison ; permission is not always given ; and few strangers come to Palma who take much interest in architecture.

In the centre of the quadrangle there was, of course, a well. No doubt in the old days many a cloistered monk had drawn water therefrom. Now one of the prisoners was busy with chain and bucket. Those old monks had made themselves prisoners for conscience sake ; these, possibly, were prisoners for want of conscience. They did not look especially bad, as far as one could observe them, and certainly none of them seemed unhappy.

The afternoon sun was casting long shadows. The delicate work of the Gothic arches found their reflections on the sheltered pavement. Everything seemed touched and gilded by rays of warm sunshine. The blue sky above was pure and ethereal. Where we could see nature, all was perfect. Man's handiwork here was also very perfect ; a refining, elevating atmosphere. Only these poor prisoners, with hair cut short and scanty garb, to remind one that there is a disturbing element in the world ; evil brought about by sin ; never intended, but permitted for some wise purpose.

We gazed long upon the scene. Our military guide remained with us, explaining many small matters and details, and seeming by no means anxious to hurry us away. He was so sympathetic and agreeable, and so polished, that I greatly desired his further acquaintance ; but we are on the point of moving about, and I did not quite see my way to future meetings. He lingered so much over our polite farewell that the same desire had evidently entered his mind, though he, too, refrained from giving it expression.

Before leaving I remarked that we should much like to see these cloisters again ; might even desire to sketch or photograph them. He turned to the doorkeeper and ordered that whenever it pleased us we were to be admitted. The man bowed low, and said his wishes should be obeyed.

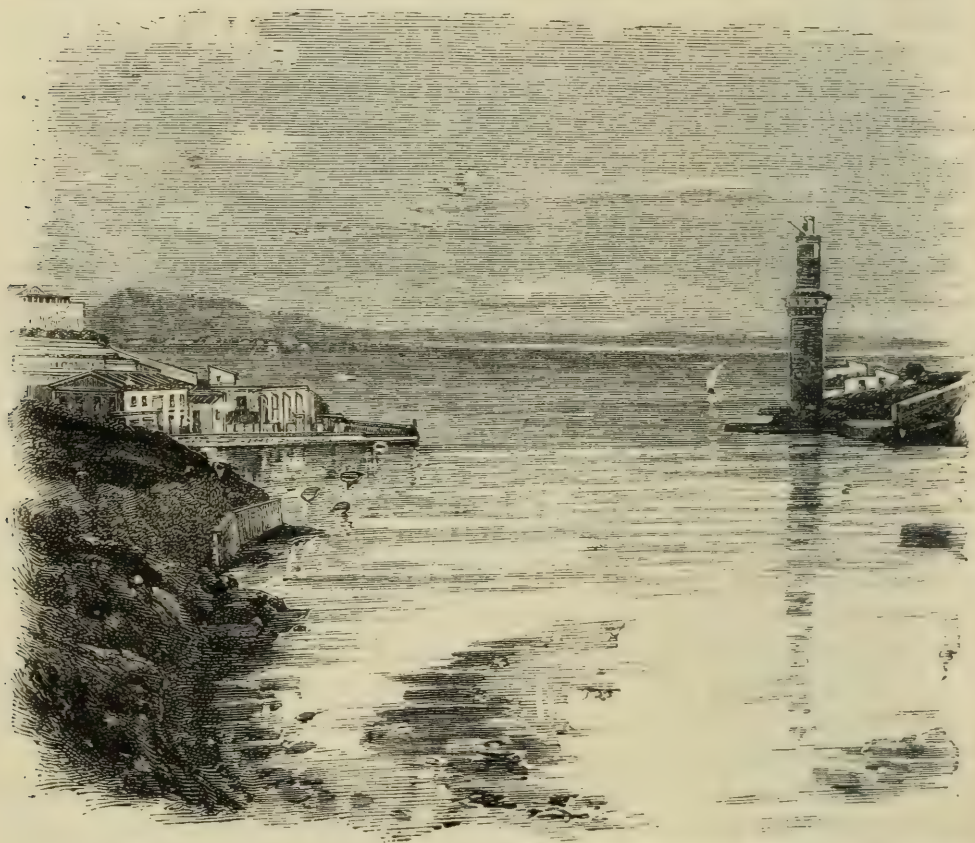
We parted. Shall we chance to meet again during our sojourn in Palma ? Probably not, simply because I desire it. Yet who knows ? It is not, of course, a great matter or a fervent desire, and it is only in the great wishes of life that as a rule destiny seems against me.

Be this as it may, chance encounters of this description greatly sweeten the progress of one's travels, and afford many an after-moment's happy recollection. Man was not made for solitude. Contact with his fellows is necessary to existence. Sympathy, companionship, the delights of close friendship, the warm hand-clasp, gaze meeting gaze, and soul going out to soul—to live without this is to live only half a life. Withdrawn, there is heart-emptiness more bitter than

wormwood, sharper than a two-edged sword. And yet in most of the circumstances of life, fate so orders that the French proverb is only too true : *Il y a toujours un qui aime, et un qui se laisse aimer.*

But a truce to sentiment, at which, I am sure, you will very properly laugh.

And, fortunately, the great business of life, its end and aim, its duty, is not mere sentiment and feeling, but the healthier influence of hard work and action and progress. Man has to play his part on



PORTO PI.

the world's battlefield, where each has a more or less important niche to fill. Each has to see to his own lamp ; each so to spin his web of life, that when the hands are folded in their last rest, he may hear echoing through the realms of Eternity that whisper of the Invisible : ALL IS WELL.

Thus may it be with each one of those who dwell in our hearts—yours and mine—when for them, as well as for ourselves, TIME SHALL BE NO MORE.

The night cometh, and also the Morning.

MARGARET'S FRENZY.

IT was an unlucky day for me—though I was not born till ten years afterwards—when that big cellar door slammed to, and nipped off the end of Margaret's little finger at the early age of seven.

Margaret was passionately fond of music, but she could not sing, and her encounter with the door prevented her from being a first-rate performer on the piano. She would not content herself with anything short of perfection; and so for years long and many the music within her found no utterance. At last, after a few grey hairs began to show themselves among her thick brown braids, Professor Mohr advised her to learn the violin.

We were spending some happy years together in Germany, Margaret playing the rôle of guardian grimalkin to my kittenish innocence. We were not related, but as inseparable as the celebrated Ladies of Llangollen. I took drawing lessons, and we were both deep in languages. In our free hours we were careless and happy as lambs in clover, until Professor Mohr's unlucky suggestion started us on the high road to despair.

We were staying in Munich when this misfortune overtook us. Margaret was fired with enthusiasm at the thought of possibly being a good musician at last. She was past thirty, and for a while tortured herself with fears that this was too old to begin to learn anything so difficult as the violin. But they raked up for her benefit many instances of musical prodigies turned out late in life, to the astonishment of the world and themselves. Perseverance, aptitude, and health would do wonders.

Convinced at last of the wisdom of her undertaking, and radiant with hope, Margaret engaged a master at more marks an hour than would have paid for half a week of operas in the *Gallerie Noble*. She next commissioned some old virtuosi and dealers in musical instruments to ferret out for her a good violin from beneath the dust and rubbish of ages. No easy matter this: for Margaret had read deeply on the subject, and would be content with nothing of a later date than the 17th century; and the graining of the cunningly mosaiced sycamore must undulate under its golden varnish "like the setting summer sun on cloud and wave."

At the expiration of a week, Herr Bratwurst wrote from the Tyrol, describing with flowery extravagance the jewel of an instrument he had unearthed at Brixen, among the goods and chattels of an Israelitish gentleman in the old clothes business. When found, this prize was a wreck, gone to pieces under billows of flimsy satin gowns, and theatrical coats of cotton velvet; but carefully set together again by the magic hand of a Bratwurst, it was worthy of Tarisio

himself. A fragment at the back bore the precious inscription "Antonius Stradivarius, Cremonensis, Faciebat Anno 1654."

And a portion of the instrument at least might be regarded as the work of this master. It was in shape a "Long Strad," and was a marvellous combination of sycamore, Swiss pine and lemon tree. The varnish was a delight to the eye, and the tone—but here words failed for description.

The supreme moment arrived when Margaret was to see this wonder, and decide whether or not she might call it her own. It seemed like opening a long buried coffin, they were so serious about undoing its box, which looked so worn and shabby.

Margaret was speechless with delight when Professor Mohr played upon it, went into technical raptures, and eventually paid for it, smilingly, the price of two good pianos. Connoisseurs, even those not interested, said it closely resembled an authentic Stradivarius, and as such was a bargain; so I kept my surprise locked in my ignorant bosom.

Margaret bought for her jewel a beautiful polished and inlaid mahogany case, lined with blue velvet. I, in a burst of enthusiasm, embroidered a fiddle-blanket of fine blue cloth, on which I executed in gold thread the treble clef, and Margaret's initials, M. A. C., in beautiful silks. A spray of flowers was depicted beneath, and I thought the whole thing a masterpiece of originality and skill. It was lined with satin, quilted, wadded and perfumed: and the case, with its blanket, would have made a nice bed for one of the roly-poly Bavarian princelings we saw in the street with their squadron of nursemaids.

Strange, uncouth sounds began now to issue from our little dwelling. It was a musical atmosphere where we lived, and people were prepared for the spasmodic wailing and sharp spiteful yells produced by a beginner on the violin. Otherwise I should have been ashamed.

Margaret worked with a feverish energy, and I must confess that she made rapid progress. From early morning till as late at night as the police regulations allowed, she fiddled as if for her life. She sawed the empty air with her bow to exercise certain elbow-muscles; played before the mirror to break herself of making hideous faces, which caused me great delight; racked her brains over harmony, and split her own ears and mine with studies ahead of her capacity. Her energy drove me to greater activity in my drawing, which, however, did not bring increased pleasure. There must have been something wrong in my character that I was not happier for this furious emulation of the busy bee. Margaret often said, with a shake of the head: "If I were eighteen like you, Kate, instead of twice that age, I would make something of myself." Then, ashamed of neglecting my opportunities, I would go up on the roof and sketch clouds, while the other girls went off for a ramble in the solitude.

We gave up going to drink coffee of an afternoon in the Hof Garten. The band there was all brass, and Margaret was mad after strings. We trailed to Symphony concerts till I was bored to death, and Margaret looked victimised in the picture-galleries where formerly we had spent such happy hours together. I began to rue the day that she decided to become famous, and a jealous hatred of the fiddle arose within me. It had already spoiled half my pleasure in Margaret's society, and she grew daily more absorbed in the senseless thing. If relief did not come from some quarter soon, our friendship of years was likely to go to pieces.

These superhuman labours began to tell on Margaret, after a while, and her teacher advised her to take a few weeks' rest in the Tyrol. I gladly agreed to accompany her, and our preparations for the trip were quickly made. I was secretly in raptures at the thought of getting rid of my enemy the fiddle for awhile; but alas! I was doomed to disappointment. While arranging our hand luggage in as compact a form as possible, I learned that the violin was to accompany us.

"But, Margaret, you need rest. Why not leave the violin here in safe hands, and return to it refreshed?" I said, hypocritically.

"I should lose in a week all I have toiled for through months," she said, with a reproachful glance: and I demurred no longer.

Margaret then began to solemnly roll the instrument of torture in a yard of flannel, cover it further with my blanket and an old silk handkerchief of generous dimensions, draw a green baize bag over the resplendent mahogany case, and fastening a shawl-strap round the whole, declared it ready for its travels.

My fears that the fiddle would be a marplot throughout our journey were not without foundation, and I soon realized that as a trip for rest and recreation, ours was turning out a failure. From the start Margaret bewildered and overwhelmed with admonitions every porter and railway official who laid hold of the baize bag with its precious contents, watching them with lynx eyes, and trotting along beside any in whose glance gleamed the unlawful fire of covetousness.

At Rosenau there was a collision between the baize bag and a brass-nailed trunk, and a hole was stove in the side of the former. When Margaret found a big scratch on the mahogany case, she sat down on a truck and wept openly. As we were to tarry a few days at Rosenau, I begged my companion to have a stout box of common wood made for the fiddle to continue its journey in, and send the too magnificent receptacle back to Munich.

To this she consented, and when we again set forth, the precious instrument reposed in a black pine box of gruesome shape. It was heavily and clumsily made, with a key as big as Mrs. Bluebeard's; it looked very like a small coffin; but it was cheap, and strong enough to resist any amount of ill-usage.

We stopped a fortnight or more at Haidenfeld, in the southern

Tyrol ; a pretty, restful nook with a deep lake walled in by cloud-high mountains, a half-ruined monastery, about which a few spectral monks still hovered, and an enticing maze of walks through heather and fragrant pine. A place for people not fiddle-ridden to enjoy every moment.

Margaret was not in the mood to enjoy the beauties of nature. Evening after evening I sat alone on our little balcony, watching the icy crest of the Adlerberg flush an exquisite pink in the setting sun, and pale again to silvery white. I longed for my friend's ear into which to pour my extravagant delight in this scene ; but she was in the back room wrestling with a flageolet tone or some other intricacy she feared might escape her.

I saw clearly that Margaret's vacation was doing her no good, and I was uneasy for her health. The study of the violin was a great strain upon the strongest nerves, and Margaret had always been rather delicate. We had both fallen under a baleful, uncanny influence, and I devoutly wished that Professor Mohr and Herr Bratwurst might have played golden harps in Heaven before lashing Margaret into this fiddle-frenzy.

While my rival absorbed the greater part of Margaret's time, I was forced to shift for myself and make the most of whatever amusement fell in my way. A good-looking young fellow, with curly black hair standing straight up from his forehead, and the merriest blue eyes I ever saw, seemed to understand my hard lot, and did his best to ameliorate it.

Our acquaintance began by my inadvertently stepping on him as he lay half asleep in the shadow of some hawthorn bushes. His name was Herbert Stacy. He was studying sculpture, and he too was taking a holiday rest in the Tyrol. We happened to have some friends in common, so our acquaintance was quite proper, and I must confess that after it began I felt a little less preyed upon by the violin.

Margaret smiled benignly enough on our insipient flirtation, but her thoughts soared above us, and she let us take frequent rambles alone. I knew that the Haidensee was a beautiful intense blue, and that the rhododendron covered the hard cheeks of the mountains with a rich lovely blush, but I did not seem half to appreciate these glories till Mr. Stacy pointed them out to me.

One day he told me, with evident regret, that he was obliged to set out for Venice the next day. Queen Margherita's birthday was approaching. There was to be a fête of unusual magnificence on the Grand Canal, and Mr. Stacy had promised some relatives of his to be with them during this celebration. It was an odd fancy going to Venice in the summer, but the journey was not very long, and their stay would be of brief duration.

So our little idyl was to end abruptly, and I should be left alone again. We had quite an affecting parting ; Mr. Stacy kissed my hand very tenderly, in Continental fashion, which I liked very much

We exchanged souvenirs. I gave him a coin from my bangle, and he presented me with a holly-wood bear supporting a thermometer. The mercury in this was defective, pointing always to 65° whatever the changes of temperature, but I prized it far above my other treasures.

My uncle Robert was to be in Venice for this same fête, I had heard, and so I gave his address to Mr. Stacy, thinking they might like to meet. The latter seemed pleased, and said he would look up my relative without fail. How I wished Margaret and I might go too! But my slender purse would not permit so expensive a journey. Margaret could go; but she, out of kindly consideration for me, always cut her coat according to my meagre supply of cloth, instead of indulging in the ample garment her means allowed.

After Herbert Stacy went, Haidenberg seemed unbearably dull, and at my request Margaret and I wandered to fresh pastures a little farther south. Here I received a letter which sent me soaring into the seventh heaven of delight. Uncle Robert sent me a generous cheque, and begged Margaret and me to join him at Venice for the fête. His wife's niece, Miss Laurie, was with him, and we should doubtless enjoy each other's society.

I remembered Madge Laurie as an unconscionable flirt, about three years older than I. I didn't like her at all then, but now I was willing to consort with anyone for the sake of a glimpse at Venice and all its gaities at that season. And best of all, Herbert Stacy was to be there, and we should meet again! How lucky that I was going; otherwise there would be no one to prevent Madge Laurie from getting him into her toils. I felt myself a match for her now.

Uncle Robert gave us minute directions about our route over the mountains by diligence, and by train from Belluno; we must be very exact in our arrangements, or we should all miss each other. He was obliged to be in Verona at a certain date, and could not tarry in Venice a day after the fête. We must notify him at once whether he might expect us or not, and if we could not arrive surely by the seventeenth we had better remain quietly where we were.

A diligence left that very hour which would take our answer, and the next morning we could start, arriving at noon of the seventeenth if all went well.

This most promising of journeys began very auspiciously on a cool delicious morning. We mounted to the coupé places in the diligence; the driver, a saucy-eyed fellow with a bunch of rhododendron in his hat, bared his head, mumbled a prayer and crossed himself before he took the reins. We started off at a fine pace over a road like a marble floor.

Even to us wayfarers who had grown quite familiar with the grand plunge and roar of an avalanche, the giddy fall of glacier torrents, the plummy pines, jauntily worn cloud-veils and other mountain-millinery,

this drive would be for all time a memorable one. Italy lapped over into the Tyrol and gave the people dark lustrous eyes, lithe figures, a graceful port, and picturesqueness of costume long before we left Austrian territory.

Near Croce Bianca a pathetic incident occurred. A wan-looking woman came out from a cottage and walked slowly towards us, bearing a small black box on her head. She said a few sentences in Italian to our guard, who reverently pushed the rough little coffin in among the luggage at the back of the diligence. He afterwards told us that it contained the body of a baby who had died the previous day. Its mother, fatally ill at the cottage, had begged that it might be buried at Pieve di Cadore, her birthplace, where she had friends who would receive it.

It was quite out of the ordinary custom to make the diligence a funeral car for a peasant baby; but regulations were elastic in that part of the world, and our guard seemed ready to risk reproof in order to gratify a dying woman's wish.

Pieve di Cadore, the birthplace of Titian, as well as of the poor woman who had lost her baby, was a mile or more distant from the diligence road. For passengers wishing to visit this place an omnibus was sent to the cross-roads; those more prosaically inclined remaining at an inn for dinner and repose.

We were among the latter, and, after taking refreshment, watched at our ease from afar the bustle of changing horses and men and escorting travellers and luggage from one conveyance to the other. At nightfall we reached Marina, where we were provided with supper, and a room decorated with pictures of saints in smiling torture.

The next morning, as we had some hours to spare before resuming our journey, Margaret astonished me by sending for her violin.

"You don't mean to say you have brought the fiddle on this expedition, of all others!" I exclaimed blankly.

"Of course I brought it. It would not have been safe otherwise, and I was not sure we should return by this route. I bade the waiter put it in the diligence without your knowledge, as I sometimes fancied it annoyed you."

"Very well," I returned resignedly. "I will go out for a walk while you practise." And I suited the action to the word without further delay.

My thoughts were very cheerful companions. The next afternoon would find us in Venice; the day following would be a red-letter one for all the year: the birthday fête, the wonders of the marine city, meeting again Herbert Stacy. All was like a delicious dream, short and sweet as dreams are, but amply worth any fatigue and discomfort which the journey might cause.

When I returned from my walk, I found Margaret in floods of tears, pacing the room distractedly and wringing her hands in undisguised distress. When she could control her voice she told me a woeful tale.

When I went out she had sent for the violin. After some unaccountable delay, a man appeared, bringing a black box, which was like—and yet strangely unlike—the fiddle case. “A creepy feeling ran down my back as I looked at it,” she said. “I sent the man to look again, but he declared there was no other black box among the luggage, except a hat-case. He grew quite violent about it, and I suppose I was excited, too, for the truth was beginning to dawn upon me. Finally, he ran away and got a screwdriver, opened the box, and started back with an exclamation which confirmed my worst fears. It contained that poor little baby, looking as beautiful and peaceful as anything you can imagine.”

“How dreadful! But you must have recovered from the shock now, Margaret, dear?”

“Shock? You don’t seem to realise that they have buried my violin.”

I dropped limply into a chair.

“There is not a moment to lose,” Margaret continued. “I must take the first conveyance back to Pieve. It breaks my heart to have you go on alone to Venice, and I shall feel uneasy about you every moment. But what can I do? Oh! dear, dear; was ever anything so distressing!”

“Couldn’t we leave the fiddle till after our trip?”

“How can you make such a wild suggestion, Kate? It would be ruined by lying so long in the damp earth. Prompt action may possibly save it from being buried at all. No, I must go at once to the rescue.”

I saw that remonstrance would be perfectly useless; Margaret would be frantic if restrained. She could not go back to Pieve alone, because to explain her mission there, Italian would be necessary, and Margaret had not learned the language, which I spoke well. She had befriended me to her own inconvenience in a thousand instances already, and it was plainly my duty to stand by her now. She did not know how great the sacrifice would be for me, for I had not told her of my hope of meeting Herbert Stacy.

After a brief, bitter conflict with myself, I said: “I will go back to Pieve with you.” And as I uttered these words I felt mentally all the torture which the wriggling saints on the wall expressed in their bodies.

“But, dear child, you will miss the fête; there is not time for both.”

“Never mind that. I didn’t feel much interest in it, anyway. It was the—the scenery I liked, and we have had the best of that already.” I was determined to play my part of martyr gracefully, even at the expense of truth.

“How good of you, Kate! I hated more than words can express to go alone among all those queer people. I couldn’t explain my mission, and they would probably think me a murderess. Never mind! I will take you to Venice next year, if I have to go in rags to accomplish it.”

"Alas! next year there will be no Herbert," I thought, regretfully.

An ill-assorted pair of steeds attached to an antiquated vehicle took us and the poor baby back to Pieve at an irritating jog-trot. I didn't care whether Titian was born there, or born at all, for that matter, and I vouchsafed hardly a glance at his house as we passed. I was too downcast and disappointed (though I strove to conceal my feelings from Margaret) even to feel amusement at the ridiculous errand upon which we had come.

It was as Margaret feared; the black box containing the violin had been taken by mistake from the diligence, received and wept over as holding the defunct baby: and as such had been buried, with an accompaniment of wax tapers and dyed immortelles, the previous afternoon.

Our story collected about us what seemed to be the whole village, open-eyed, open-mouthed; and these features, when Italian, can accomplish wondrous flashing and chattering under excitement.

The veritable baby was followed to the churchyard by a procession which would have delighted the soul of its mother, could the poor woman have seen it.

After Margaret and I had undergone, from judicial authority, a fire of cross-questioning, beginning with the maiden name of our respective mothers, and ending with our opinion of Tyrolean scenery, the men we had engaged were allowed to raze the little mound which covered Margaret's treasure.

As the grave was opened, a great many blue linen aprons were pressed to fine dark eyes, sobs broke from linen-covered bosoms hung with chains of more or less claims to sterling worth, and heads wreathed in black braids thrust through with silver pins, bobbed to and fro with emotion. This exhibition of sentiment seemed out of place over the remains of a fiddle, but it was easier for the peasant women to weep over a grave, as was their wont, than to discriminate.

The box was taken out, and even Margaret admitted that the violin appeared to be uninjured. We waited while they buried the poor little baby: and I think our offering of a big bunch of garden roses raised us to the rank of royalty in the estimation of the simple folk of Pieve.

Three months later, when our Tyrolean trip was of the past, and lessons had begun again in Munich, Uncle Robert wrote me bitter news. Madge Laurie was engaged to Mr. Herbert Stacey, a very agreeable fellow whom they had met in Venice.

I thereupon gave the mendacious holly-wood bear to Gretchen, our chambermaid, and told Leonard he might walk home with me from the lectures on Perspective.

He need never know that I use him as salve to patch my broken heart.

BIDDING BY PROXY.

"I MUST have that Cuyp" said Mr. Septimus Palecourt to himself, as he stood gazing intently at a cattle piece, "on view" with several other pictures of various dimensions, exposed in readiness for the next day's sale in a fashionable auction room.

"Shouldn't wonder if I got it cheap," he went on, referring to the catalogue he held in his hand. "Either from ignorance or want of judgment, this gem of a painting is described here as 'attributed' to Cuyp—quite enough to hinder anyone from bidding unless he happens to know better. Attributed, indeed! I should think so, and rightly. A more undoubted specimen of the master never hung on a wall."

After thus decidedly expressing his opinion, and bestowing a farewell glance on the object of his admiration, the speaker put his spectacles and the catalogue into his pocket, and waddling out of the room hailed a passing Hansom, which speedily conveyed him to his home in Thurloe Square.

Now, if there was one thing on which Mr. Palecourt prided himself more than another, it was his knowledge of art; although where he could have picked it up was a puzzle not easy to solve.

He was a stout little man of no patrician extraction, who, having realised a handsome fortune in business, had retired into private life at the age of fifty-two, and taken up his abode, as he was wont to express it, "within a stone's throw" of the South Kensington Museum: of which, as well as of every other artistic exhibition in London, he became an assiduous frequenter. Being afflicted, moreover, with the prevalent "collecting" mania, he very soon converted the fairly spacious house occupied by him into a repository for all sorts of miscellaneous curiosities, more or less apocryphal, the fruits of many an exploring ramble through the highways and byways of the Metropolis.

His special hobby was the formation of a picture gallery, and curious indeed were the examples of different schools unearthed, no one but himself knew where, but vouched for by their owner as originals of unimpeachable authenticity. He had now an opportunity, which he resolved not to miss, of adding to his collection a hitherto unrepresented name; and before reaching Hyde Park corner had already made up his mind in which room he would hang up his acquisition when he got it.

"Women have a good eye for effect," he said. "I'll talk it over with Sophy, but I'm pretty sure she will be of my opinion."

Mrs. Palecourt: one of the few ladies nowadays who prefer adopting their husband's decision to the trouble of thinking for themselves: having, as was anticipated, placidly signified her

approval ; a vacant space on the dining room wall was agreed upon as a fitting place of honour for the coming masterpiece ; and its installation thereon regarded as a foregone conclusion.

Slips, however, between the cup and the lip will sometimes occur, and the next morning's post brought with it a summons which materially affected Master Septimus's plans. It was from an old friend, on the point of embarking the same evening from Portsmouth, who desired to consult him on certain business matters before leaving England.

"There's no help for it," said Mr. Palecourt, after reading the letter aloud for his wife's benefit. "I must go ; so there's an end of it. If he could only have waited until to-morrow."

"Very provoking," chimed in Sophy. "We must hope for better luck another time."

"Not likely," doubtfully replied her liege lord. "Cuyps don't turn up every day. However, I may as well start at once ; and don't wait dinner for me, for I may not be back till late."

Stopping at the nearest stationer's for a "Bradshaw" on his way to Victoria, and hastily consulting that instructive manual, Mr. Palecourt suddenly discovered to his inexpressible delight that he had half an hour to spare before the departure of the train.

"By Jove," he muttered, "I never thought of that ! I have plenty of time to leave a commission with the auctioneer, and that will do quite as well as if I were there myself."

A word to "cabby," accompanied by a suggestive hint of possible largesse, soon brought him to his destination ; and he was at once ushered into the auctioneer's private room, where he briefly explained to that functionary the object of his visit.

"I understand," said the latter. "Number eighty-six in the catalogue : a landscape with cattle and figures, attributed to Cuyp. Certainly ; my clerk shall bid for you, Mr. ——"

"Palecourt, 134, Thurloe Square."

"Very good. How far do you intend to go ?"

"Why," said Septimus, who had not considered that point, "I should think fifty pounds would be ample."

"Better leave a margin, and say a hundred. You wouldn't like to miss it, of course ?"

"Well, no, but a hundred is rather a fancy price. However, you may put it down at that, though it isn't likely to fetch half as much."

"I should be very much surprised if it did," said the auctioneer, and the interview closed ; Mr. Palecourt regaining his Hansom, and succeeding in catching the train for Portsmouth exactly two minutes before it steamed out of the station.

Meanwhile, his wife was relating to her brother who, living close by, generally dropped in for a chat in the course of the morning, the mischance that had prevented Septimus from attending the sale.

Mr. Ferguson, a practical man of commercial rather than artistic

tendencies, shrugged his shoulders. "I should have thought he had pictures enough already," he drily remarked.

"Well, yes, we have a good many," assented Mrs. Palecourt. "But he has set his heart on this one, poor fellow, and I can't bear to see him disappointed. I only wish I could get it for him."

"If you care so much about it," said her brother, "nothing is easier. I'll manage it for you."

"No, will you, Tom?" eagerly exclaimed Sophy. "I don't mind what it costs, provided he has it."

"Very well; give me one of your husband's cards and the catalogue. By the bye, what is the number I am to bid for?"

"Eighty-six; I've marked it in pencil. And come back to dinner, for I shall be all alone, and Septimus told me not to wait for him."

"All right," said Mr. Ferguson, looking at his watch. "Five minutes past twelve, so I needn't hurry, and the walk will do me good."

On arriving at the auction room, he found that the sale had already begun. "I had better not bid myself," he thought, "or they will be sure to run me up. I will get one of those fellows to do it for me." Looking round, he beckoned to a short, florid individual, Shadrach by name, with whom he had had some previous dealings, and gave him the necessary instructions, to which the other responded by an intelligent twinkle of his eye, and quietly insinuated himself among the bidders.

Lot after lot was briskly put up and knocked down, and ere long it came to the turn of eighty-six.

"A landscape with cattle and figures, attributed to Cuyp," proclaimed the auctioneer from his desk. "Shall we say five pounds to begin with?"

A nod from his clerk sitting at the table.

"Guineas," said Shadrach.

No one else making a sign, the contest proceeded actively between the two opponents; the one steadily progressing with pounds, and the other immediately capping him with guineas. When the bidding had reached fifty guineas, a murmur of astonishment circulated among the bystanders; and the leviathan picture-dealer of Cottonopolis, after a contemptuous glance at the object of their rivalry, honoured the competitors with a prolonged stare, evidently regarding them as a couple of lunatics.

"Twice as much as it is worth," grumbled Mr. Ferguson, "but I suppose I had better go on."

At length the struggle came to a climax; the clerk's final bid of a hundred pounds was followed by the inevitable nod of his adversary; whereupon the former collapsed with a negative shake of the head, and after the usual formula of "No advance on a hundred guineas?" from the auctioneer, down went the hammer, and Shadrach, rejoining his employer, congratulated him on his acquisition.

"See that the picture is brought to-morrow morning to this address," said Mr. Ferguson, giving him the card, "and the cheque will be ready."

"What a surprise for Septimus," said the delighted Mrs. Palecourt to her brother, as they sat dawdling over their dessert. "How pleased he will be!"

"Not so sure of that," gruffly replied Tom. "Rather more than he bargained for, I fancy. However," he went on, as a cab stopped at the door, "here he is to answer for himself; and if you take my advice, you won't say a word about it until he has had something to eat."

When the traveller had recruited his energies with the aid of a "réchauffé" dinner, his wife, unable any longer to restrain her impatience, burst out with the news. "What do you think has happened, dear, since you were away? The picture is yours."

"Is it?" replied Mr. Palecourt, with less enthusiasm than she expected, and wondering in his own mind how she knew it. "What's the figure?"

"A hundred guineas."

"Guineas!" echoed Septimus, not over pleased. "The fellow has gone beyond my commission," he thought.

"Yes," continued Sophy in great excitement. "Tom went down to the rooms on purpose to buy it for you."

"Tom!" exclaimed her husband, thoroughly puzzled. "What had he to do with it? I left a commission myself for a hundred pounds."

"You did?" said Mr. Ferguson. Then, my good fellow, you've made a pretty mess of it, for we have been bidding against each other all the time."

"It wasn't Tom's fault," interposed Mrs. Palecourt, "he did it to oblige me. I was so anxious you shouldn't miss it. If I had only known you intended bidding yourself!"

"Never thought of it until I was half way to the station," growled Septimus, still harping on the unnecessary outlay.

However, when morning came, and with it the picture, its owner, who in the meantime had reflected that after all he had got it at a ridiculously low price, felt equal to discharging his liability, including Shadrach's commission, with a tolerably good grace; and before many days had elapsed, the newly-framed masterpiece occupied the place of honour in the gallery of Thurloe Square. So elated, indeed, was Septimus with the possession of such a treasure, that he literally talked of nothing else; and it was confidently whispered, by the chosen few invited to inspect the marvel, that poor Palecourt had decidedly Cuyt on the brain.

Some weeks later, while strolling in Piccadilly, he came across a

club acquaintance, Massingham by name : one of those pillars of the turf who, when race meetings are slack, occasionally turn up in London.

"Hullo!" shouted that worthy: "haven't seen you for an age. Still at the old place, eh? I must look you up one of these days."

"Do," said Septimus, profiting by the occasion to introduce his favourite hobby. "Come and lunch, and I'll show you a gem of a picture I have just added to my collection."

"All right. I'm no great judge of that sort of thing, though I ought to be, if tastes followed suit. My father had a fancy that way, and when he died, as paintings are not exactly in my line, I sent the whole lot to the rooms last month, and realised a tidy sum. The best of it was, I regularly floored old Moss."

"Moss?" said Mr. Palecourt, inquiringly.

"Why, I thought everybody knew Moss, the bill discounter: lives in a little street off Holborn. The fact is, a year or two ago I had been hard hit on the Cesarewitch, and was a couple of hundred short when settling day came. So I went to Moss, and managed to get half in cash, and the remainder in a case of the most villainous champagne you ever tasted, and a daub of a picture he called a cattle piece, not worth a fiver, but which he swore (those fellows will swear anything, you know) was painted by some famous Dutchman."

"Not Cuyp," faltered Septimus, beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"That's the name," said Massingham. "Three cows and two chaps smoking their pipes and leaning against a tree. Well, I made up the money somehow, and kept the thing until the other day, when I sent it in with the rest: and what do you think? Two idiots ran it up over a hundred, and I wish the one who got it joy of his bargain. When I told Moss, he was furious. Bye bye, old man; I'll see you before I leave town, and have a look at your 'gem.'"

"I'll take very good care you don't," said Mr. Palecourt to himself, as he walked moodily homewards.

Next day, the apocryphal "Cuyp" was degraded from its high estate, and unceremoniously consigned to the lumber-room; and it is currently reported that our friend Septimus is still in quest of a more authentic work of art to fit into the empty frame.

CHARLES HERVEY.



THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER VI.

NEW FRIENDS AND OLD.

MRS. MILTON came up the stairs with her cap a little awry, and an unusual light in her faded eyes. She was evidently excited; and excitement with her was so rare a thing that Beatrice (herself wrought upon by the strange music), began to feel almost frightened. Had something happened? She hoped that Harriet would speak out soon, and not keep her in suspense.

"Truth is stranger than fiction!" When Mrs. Milton had delivered herself of this little platitude, Beatrice knew that everything must be all right. "I shall never be severe upon novelists any more, for making the most unlikely things come to pass; and in future I shall always believe in Richard's instincts. You may remember he knew instinctively that Mr. Earle was perfectly to be trusted?"

"Oh, has he found out anything about Mr. Earle? You are so slow, Harriet!"

"Beatrice, your hair wants brushing, and you must be quick about it, for we are going to have tea. As to Mr. Earle, he is downstairs with my husband at this moment, waiting quietly for your appearance."

"I must have slept a long time." The girl hurried to the toilet-table, and began to smoothe her wavy locks with fingers that trembled slightly. "But does Mr. Milton know Mr. Earle? If there's anything to tell, why not tell it quickly?"

"It can't be told quickly, child, when it's a long story. It seems that after Mr. Earle left you yesterday, he took it into his head to go into the City and seek an interview with Mr. Corder. It was Mr. Corder, you know, who bought my husband's wine business, and he pays Richard a good salary for conducting it. You have heard of that?"

"Yes, I have heard of that. But Mr. Earle said he was without friends—how could he say so, when he knew Mr. Corder?"

"Because he did not know that Mr. Corder was willing to be his friend. It was a happy inspiration that led him to Aldersgate Street; I daresay we shall hear more about it later on," said Mrs. Milton, leading the way downstairs.

Beatrice followed, with a full heart, and a head that was not perhaps quite as clear as usual. It was a great happiness to know

that the man who had been so unwilling to live, had found the rough path of life made easier for his feet. She thought, for the hundredth time, of the pale, set face that she had first seen in the dawn-light of yesterday, and recalled her own passionate resolve to save him from a rash death. She could not tell, then, whether he was saved for weal or for woe; but she remembered a saying of George Eliot's, that "it is but once we can know our worst sorrows," and something seemed to tell her that his darkest hour was past. And the music—that strange pathetic music—was still ringing in her ears; the piteous wailing that had changed into the clear notes of triumphant hope, and everlasting victory.

Godwin Earle looked up eagerly as she entered the sitting-room, and saw her full before him, fresher, brighter than he had ever seen her yet. The light of joy was on her face; the blue eyes shone with welcome as she put her little hand into his. Mr. Milton, who was watching them both with an elderly man's kindly interest in young people, could not divine the secret understanding which gave a quiet gladness to their greeting. And Harriet—well, Harriet had really begun to fear that Beatrice was forgetting some of her most important injunctions, and throwing too much warmth into her manner to a man. The ideal maiden (often described by Mrs. Milton in her governess days), was supposed to assume a little affable, chilly way with the other sex, which always inspired them with the profoundest reverence and admiration. But this way was wanting in Beatrice, and Mrs. Milton was seriously concerned; although she admitted that her pupil was looking very pretty, and had a natural grace which covered many defects.

"Mr. Earle and I are likely to see a good deal of each other in future," said Richard Milton, with quiet friendliness. "And I hope we shall have him here very often."

"You are very good," replied Godwin, heartily. "As I am beginning a new life, I shall want new friends. I have drifted away from a great many old ones lately: or perhaps they have drifted away from me."

"They will probably drift back," said Milton, rubbing his hands with a well-pleased smile. "People have a habit of getting near a successful man, haven't they? And if I mistake not, success isn't very far from you now."

But Godwin shook his head.

"I can hardly take such a sanguine view of my fortunes as you do," he answered. "But anyhow there's a wonderful change for the better. And I feel that I owe *almost* everything to Mr. Corder."

Beatrice understood the stress laid upon that word *almost*, and knew that he had not forgotten his debt to her.

"How strange it seems that your aunt should have been Mrs. Frank Corder, Mr. Earle!" said Harriet, pouring out tea. "My husband was fond of poor Frank as a boy. I never knew anything sadder than

the death of that young couple—one wonders how Mr. Corder could have borne up under his sorrows !”

“And his loneliness,” added Richard Milton. “He has not a relative left in the world. Mr. Earle’s coming must be quite a godsend to him.”

“But you mustn’t suppose that he means to make a relative of me,” Godwin said, quickly. “He has befriended me, it’s true ; but he doesn’t know yet how I shall turn out. All that he has done—and it’s a great deal—is to give me a clerk’s place in Mr. Milton’s office, and an opportunity of learning the wine business. I don’t despair of getting on, but I shan’t be worth much, I’m afraid, for years to come. Learning a business is slow work, you see.”

“Not so slow as you may imagine, perhaps,” returned Richard, in his cheery way. “It depends a good deal upon your grappling power, I fancy. But we are forgetting, Mr. Earle, that we haven’t yet thanked you for looking after our charge. It was owing mainly to you, I think, that Miss Ward came to us in safety.”

For an instant, Godwin was slightly bewildered. This was indeed a new view of the case, and he began to wonder what kind of story Beatrice could possibly have told. But the girl came to his aid with quiet promptitude.

“I have been telling Mrs. Milton,” she said, looking at him steadily, “how I suddenly fainted on my way to the Silverdean railway-station, and you picked me up, and saw me safely through the journey. I wasn’t quite myself that morning, perhaps—there had been many things to bear, and I daresay I was unnerved by all my leavetakings.”

“Of course you were,” chirped Harriet. “You were preoccupied and depressed, and you set off on a long, early walk without eating a good breakfast. It was very silly not to have ordered a fly.”

“Still I am glad I did not order a fly,” said Beatrice, in a peculiarly quiet tone ; “and I daresay it will be a long while before I faint again—I feel very strong now.”

So Godwin knew she had kept his secret, and would keep it till the end of her days. She could be silent as well as brave, and the bond between them was strengthened by this wise reserve of hers.

When a man first discovers that one woman is a broken reed, he always begins to doubt the stability of the entire sex. Having found that Alma Lindrick’s faith was of a kind that would not bear leaning upon, he had half resolved never to rest again on such an uncertain stay as a girl’s heart. But, as those steady blue eyes met his, he said to himself that, after all, there were some women on the earth worth living for. He was no enthusiast, with romantic visions of feminine angels, but an everyday man of the present age, with plenty of knowledge of the world, and of the worst part of the world, and experience had told him that, even with the most perfect of life-companions, there must now and then be a want of unison, an inevitable

touch of disappointment. Yet, something seemed to say that a man might safely put his fate into the hands of Beatrice Ward, and never repent having given her his entire trust.

When he rose to take his leave, the Miltons begged him to return and dine with them.

As has been already said, his old friends had drifted away from him, and there was great need of following Mr. Corder's counsel and beginning again. Many old companions were left behind in India; and from others Godwin had, himself, proudly withdrawn, with all the morbid haughtiness of a man who feels the time is out of joint. Few knew where to look for him, even if they had desired to find him; for London is a capital place to get lost in, and Bulstrode-street is well removed from fashionable clubs and promenades. And finding that the clouds were thickening round his life, Godwin Earle had avoided the favourite haunts of those who had once been in his own set, and led a hermit-life existence in the midst of a crowd.

When we come fairly out into the light there are few of us who do not look back, a little contemptuously, on the old selves that walked in the shade. What poor creatures we were in those days! Why did we persist in silence and isolation when there were ready hands and kind hearts waiting for us among the millions around us? Why could we not see that, in spite of all its badness, this much-abused old world is by no means destitute of helpers and sympathisers? Why indeed? Difficult questions to answer, perhaps; and yet when the head is sick and the heart faint, one may not have spirit enough to put one's fellow-men to the test. Godwin, walking back cheerfully to Bulstrode-street (after having accepted the invitation to dinner), was disposed to be quite severe on himself for his former misery and deplorable dejection.

In the course of the evening he found an opportunity of saying a few words privately to Beatrice. Mrs. Milton had been called out of the room; her husband was smoking his nightly pipe among the ferns and geraniums in the little paved yard, and Godwin and Beatrice were left alone.

"So you don't regret your walk in the dawn?" he said in a low voice. "But, somehow, I can't think it was my true self you saw then; I hardly care to claim kinship with the man who was so brutally resolved to resist your entreaties. I must have been mad—really mad—at that time!"

"We all have our mad moments," Beatrice answered. "And I think solitude would soon make me mad. Don't fancy I don't know something of all that you have felt. When I sat alone in an empty cottage, and the twilight was creeping over the little room, I began to have strange fancies. It takes almost a divine courage to go on living when we feel that there is nothing left to live for. And yet, how many people do it, and we never think of them as heroes or heroines at all."

Godwin's thoughts reverted to old Corder ; and Beatrice, hardly knowing why, had suddenly remembered the noble, pale face and sad eyes of Mr. Vordenberg.

"There is an unsuspected heroine very near me at this moment," he said, with a look that brought a faint tinge of pink into the girl's soft cheek.

Just then, Harriet came gliding quickly back again, and Godwin saw that he was not to have another chance of confidential talk that evening. But there would be other chances by-and-by ; he meant to come often to this pleasant house, and later on, when Mrs. Milton had learnt to put confidence in him, he might get many opportunities of having Beatrice all to himself. Later on still, if he found that there was no disappointment in sounding the depths of this girl's heart—but that, indeed, was going a great deal too far. This fresh, unworldly kind of friendship was quite enough for the present, and he had no mind to strain his mental vision by gazing hard into the future.

And yet, although he was "beginning again," he had not entirely done with the past. It takes a long while to tear up an old love by the roots, especially when those roots have grown with a man's growth and spread over his whole life ; and he could not think of Alma Lindrick and her last letter, without a sharp pain. But, as the early summer days came and went, and he began to get accustomed to his work in the office, and even to feel an ever-increasing interest in the business he had set himself to learn, the pain gradually became less ; and the new life, with its plans and hopes, left him little leisure for brooding over the old.

"You are getting on fast, Godwin," said Mr. Corder, one day. He had quickly fallen into the habit of calling the young man by his christian name, and seemed to feel a pleasure in the sound of it. "I hardly thought that you would so soon learn to run in a new groove. And you are looking better, ay, and brighter, than you did when you came to me two months ago."

"And I feel better and brighter, thanks to you," Godwin replied.

"Oh, there are thanks due to other people, I fancy. By the way, I heard Miss Ward saying that she had never seen a play in her life. Will you take her and Mrs. Milton to see the *Merchant of Venice* this evening? They won't care about being escorted by an old fogie like myself."

Godwin complied, readily enough, and so it came to pass that one or two of his old acquaintances saw him enter the Lyceum that night with two ladies. The three seated themselves in the stalls ; and there was something about Godwin Earle's aspect which made one man say to another that "Earle's affairs must be looking up again." Earle himself, in an irreproachable dress-suit, and with a dainty button-hole, was looking as well as he had ever done in his palmy days. Better, perhaps, for adversity often has a refining influence on a man's face, although it frequently destroys the beauty of woman.

As for his companions, the elder was a quiet little gentlewoman, past middle age ; and the younger was one of those girls who, wherever they appear, are sure to attract the eyes of men. Not that she strove in any way to win notice. To her the whole scene was so delightfully new, that she had forgotten to think about herself at all. But the fresh, soft face, the faultless complexion, and the rippling hair with its golden lights, were not likely to pass unseen, even in a crowd which comprised a good deal of the beauty and fashion of town. The black gown with its heart-shaped bodice, revealed a beautiful neck and throat ; and a cluster of white flowers and maidenhair were her only adornments. She was tall, considerably taller than her chaperon ; and the people near could get a good view of her features and figure as she went to her seat.

In the row of stalls behind Godwin's party there sat a young woman and an elderly man, who both favoured Miss Ward with their attention, and said something to each other in a low tone. The lady was seven-and-twenty, and looked thirty, for hers was a face that is never young when extreme youth has fled. The aquiline features had always been a little too sharp for perfect beauty ; the chin was too prominent ; the lips were too thin. The eyes, rather small, were light blue ; and the complexion (lovely in girlhood) had lost the apple-blossom freshness of pink-and-white, and was slightly faded. But the pale golden hair was prettily dressed ; and a set of good old family pearls added to the wearer's look of distinction. Still, time had not dealt as tenderly with Miss Lindrick as he deals with a woman of large mind and heart.

She was pinched and chilled, partly by training, partly by a certain meanness inherited from her father. The girl whom Godwin had wooed and loved so truly, had slowly changed into a hard woman.

Just as Godwin Earle was entering the theatre, Alma had caught sight of him. She had given him up ; yet in a chilly little way, she very nearly loved him still. Her heart began to throb fast at that first glimpse of his face. He was looking so well, too ; not handsome (many men of less refinement were far handsomer), but haughty, and well set up and prosperous. Yes, decidedly prosperous. Had there by any chance come to him some wonderful change of fortune ? Had anybody died and left him some money ? No, Alma could not entertain that last idea for a moment. She had always been well acquainted with the family history of the Earles, and knew that there was no wealth among them. And in spite of improved appearance, she believed that the taint of a certain suspicion must be clinging to Godwin still.

The old ladies at Meadow House had intended carefully to preserve the secret of his disgrace. But young Olga Gradizoff, silly and incautious, had one day babbled of family matters to the Lindricks, and they had very soon extracted from her the whole story of the loss of the necklace.

Did Alma really believe her lover guilty, or not? She could hardly have answered that question, even to herself. It was not in her to set her heart's love upon a pedestal, high above all reach of slander. Circumstances might have driven him to the deed, she thought; and Olga had seemed perfectly convinced that he knew what had become of the rubies. Perhaps the matter might be satisfactorily explained some day: and yet—would not the stain of the suspicion remain upon him always? She had talked the affair over with her father, and he had not hesitated to say that the evidence against young Earle was very strong. He knew that his daughter kept her liking for Godwin, and did his best to sever the last tie that bound her to an unfortunate man.

Still, although that last tie had been most definitely and completely severed, Miss Lindrick was conscious of a sudden thrill, and then a dull pain. She could not be quite composed when Godwin came into the theatre with that tall girl in black.

Who was she? Alma did not admire her, of course, and felt perfectly certain that she was a nobody. But there is often a dangerous sort of charm about even a plain woman who keeps the "dew of the morning" upon her still. And Alma told herself that she should be really sorry to see poor Godwin beguiled into a low marriage.

And so, in the pause that followed the first act, when Godwin turned his head, his eyes encountered the gaze of those pale eyes which had once seemed to him beautiful by reason of their truth. And for old sake's sake his heart, too, began to throb fast as Alma leaned forward to speak to him.

"How strange that we should meet here!" She was sitting exactly behind Miss Ward, and the high treble voice almost made Beatrice start. "We haven't heard of you for a long time; and yet I have made many inquiries at Meadow House."

"They don't know anything about me at Meadow House." Godwin spoke calmly, but a swift glance had shown Beatrice that his face was flushed. "How are you? Have you been long in town?"

"Only a month; you know I never let papa defraud me of my lawful share of gaiety. But he is just the same as he was in old days, and hates London as much as ever."

Here Colonel Lindrick, feeling himself drawn into the conversation, said something indistinct in a civil tone; and his daughter went on:

"Now, tell me, what you are doing? You are looking very well—much better than you did when you left Fairbridge. I believe you mean to distinguish yourself, and astonish us all some day."

"It isn't very easy to astonish people nowadays," he replied, rather languidly. "They get sated with 'sensation' in every conceivable shape, don't they?"

"I suppose they do," said Alma, without following him in the least. "But you haven't answered me, you know. What are you doing?"

Is it anything very interesting? I always fancied that you would write books, or paint pictures. Don't you remember that I used to say you were a lazy genius?"

"You recognised the laziness, but not the genius." He laughed slightly. I think I shall go to my grave without writing a book or painting a picture."

"Well, but what *are* you doing? Don't you see that I am really very anxious to know?"

Beatrice's ears, abnormally sharp just then, could catch a faint tremor in the voice, which told that this anxiety was not wholly feigned.

"I put off telling you as long as I could, just because I don't like to shock your sensibilities. But if you will have the truth, here it is—I am learning a business."

"A business? Oh, really! But that doesn't mean shop-keeping, does it?"

"Not quite; but it does mean buying and selling."

"Buying and selling what? Ah, Godwin, why are you so reserved? Isn't it natural that an old friend should be interested in all your doings?"

Beatrice, sitting bolt upright, was listening with all her might; and Alma wanted her to listen. Partly to please herself, and partly to annoy "that girl," Miss Lindrick had spoken in a half-tender, half-reproachful tone; the tone that a woman always uses if she has once had power over a man, and desires to revive the old influence. And although Godwin Earle had clad himself in a coat of mail, resolved to be proof against all the blandishments of a false woman, that pleading voice smote him between the joints of the harness, and found out the weak place in his heart.

"There is no need for reserve." He spoke quietly, but not quite in his natural manner. "An old acquaintance of mine has taken me by the hand, and I am learning to be a wine-merchant."

At these words, Colonel Lindrick pricked up his ears, and began to wonder whether they had not dismissed Godwin somewhat prematurely. The Colonel did not like trade, but he liked money; and if a man went in for business at all, a wine business had, he thought, a better sound than any other. Moreover he knew something that no one else knew, and that secret knowledge made him disposed to be very civil to his daughter's old suitor. Alma, although he had filled the air around her with rumours of her wealth, was by no means a great heiress after all.

"Ah, then you are sure to be very rich some day!" Alma was quite in earnest now. "I have often thought that you would find yourself on the high road to fortune. Indeed, I have said the same thing to the aunts at Meadow House—haven't I, papa?"

But that reference to Meadow House was ill-timed, and it had the effect of weakening the impression she had made. To speak

of the aunts was to remind Godwin of their unjust suspicions and cruel mistrust. His face hardened, and his voice grew haughty and cold.

"I have ceased to concern myself very much about my relations' opinion of me," he said, proudly. And then his glance turned to Beatrice, and he got a little smile from her. Miss Lindrick saw the smile, and saw, too, that the girl's profile was pretty. And all at once she discovered that her own heart, usually so cold, was hot and angry; and she was even conscious of an unlady-like desire to inflict personal chastisement on Godwin's companion. How dared she smile so familiarly on a man who had once been Miss Lindrick's accepted lover?

The curtain drew up again, disclosing the room in Portia's house, and Portia's fair self reclining on the cushions of her couch, and then came that spirited dialogue between mistress and maid which book-learned Beatrice already knew by heart. She forgot all about the conversation she had just overheard; her eyes and thoughts were spell-bound by those two graceful women in their rich, quaint dresses, whose sweet accents seemed to give a new meaning to the old words they spoke. With them, in those moments of enchantment, she lived and moved, and had her being; her attention never wandered for an instant; her blue eyes shone with happy interest; and Godwin, looking at the expressive face by his side, contrasted it with the world-wearied faces all around him. Happy girl, to be so fresh and young and easily amused! He almost envied her the capacity for such intense enjoyment.

Miss Lindrick, still feeling mortified and annoyed, thought the play a great bore from beginning to end; and inwardly vowed that she would never see anything of Shakespeare's again. It was all so elaborate and unnatural and long-winded, she said to herself; and it was so exasperating to see Godwin sitting by that girl's side. She could not bear it to the bitter end, and before the curtain rose upon the last act, she had whispered to her father, and the pair quitted the theatre.

Their departure was a relief to Godwin; but he heartily wished that he had never met them. He was beginning to forget; and Alma's voice had awakened those sleeping memories that he had lulled to rest.

And so it came to pass that Beatrice found him quiet and grave when the play was over. A shadow had come over him, and Beatrice felt that the atmosphere had suddenly grown chill.

There are women who possess such a happy self-confidence that they can chatter on to a silent companion, convinced that their brightness is sufficient to dispel his gloom. Sometimes they succeed; but ten to one they fail, and the dejected one votes them a nuisance, who will not let him have a fit of the blues in peace. And there are other women so dense that they never perceive any changes of mood—

women to whom sunshine and shade are both alike. But to neither of these two classes did Beatrice Ward belong.

She was too young and too inexperienced to have acquired that belief in self which often gives a woman great power over a man when it is joined to wisdom. Hers was a sweet and generous heart, ripening by slow degrees. To her love came quickly and self-knowledge slowly.

While they were all driving homeward she was silently wondering at her own girlish dreams—those happy dreams that had brightened her whole life. She had not always guessed where the glory came from ; but it shone over her daily path, and gilded every thought and word and deed. And now, because one face seemed cold and changed, all the light was gone.

She had secretly believed, from the very first day of their meeting, that an unhappy love had played no unimportant part in Godwin's history. Earle was a man whose face had a story written on it ; and such faces generally possess an indescribable charm for young women. They do not know how the story has been written ; they would not, if they were told the truth, believe that sin and folly have printed on certain beloved features that stamp of ineffaceable melancholy. They love him "for the sorrows he has passed," without inquiring why those sorrows fell to his lot. He has been wronged, they say to themselves ; some woman has played him false ; some friend has betrayed him. And so they pity him for imaginary woes, until the pit deepens, unawares, into love.

It was well for Beatrice that the hero of her first romance, although not possessed of many heroic qualities, had more good in him than most of the refined-looking, weary men who lead captive silly women—aye, and wise ones, too.

If she could only have read his thoughts when he went to his room that night, her anxious soul would have found comfort.

No sooner had he left Mrs. Milton and her charge at their own house, than he began to blame himself for his fit of despondency. It was his own fault if a bright evening had had a gloomy ending.

What man in his senses would care for the faint scent of *pot pourri*, when a fresh rose was unfolding its rich heart by his side ? He was just beginning to feel Beatrice's healthy influence stealing over his life, and renewing his youth ; and Alma crossed his path, and disturbed him with words and smiles that were only sweet because they brought with them the perfume of the past.

In spite of all that poets have sung, old things are *not* always best. It is a sentimental feeling that invests bygone days with fictitious glory. Those hearts are happiest that know a second youth in their maturity ; and to men like Earle a second youth means a new love.

(To be continued.)

IN THE SUNSET.

THE day is fading, the west is glowing
 With tints, whose glory brings back to me
 A far, fair haven with white sails going
 Over and over a sapphire sea ;
 Oh ! far, fair haven—oh ! sea bird flying,
 I fain would borrow your bold, brave wing,
 To mount and soar while the day is dying,
 And follow the red sun westering.

Oh ! sapphire sea, set with gem-like islands—
 Mine eyes with longing will weary sore,
 Ere again I see the corn-crowned highlands
 Which guard and girdle that shining shore !
 In coigns and clefts that the woodbine covers,
 Are fairy places I knew of old,
 Where lips—ah, haply the lips of lovers—
 Have told the story that once I told !

Fair and quiet, and brightly tender,
 The low light gilded the wood and lea,
 For day was dying in royal splendour
 As we two stood by that western sea ;
 The soft wind scattered bright, tiny pieces
 From beds of cloud where the sun reposed,
 And sent them sailing like golden fleeces
 In amber skies ere the twilight closed.

The lovely day was so long a-dying,
 But came at last the enchanting hour
 When gentle Zephyr, with long-drawn sighing,
 Shook the scent from the woodbine flower.
 Then o'er the dusk of the oaks and beeches
 The young moon mounted her throne afar,
 And lit with silver the grey sea-reaches
 Lying beyond the harbour bar.

Ah, Love's sweet words will again be spoken,
 Like those we breathed on the fragrant air,
 And Love's sweet vows will be lightly broken,
 As those have been that we uttered there ;
 And still the boats will be, wing-like, flitting
 About the islands that gem the bay—
 Oh ! human hearts are so long forgetting
 The bliss and pain of a bygone day !

HELEN MARION BURNSIDE.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR

SHE WAVED HIM ASIDE IN HER WILFUL MANNER.

THE ARGOSY.

MAY, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER VIII.

AFTER THE DINNER-PARTY.

ONCE more in the drawing-room at Berkeley Square sat the Dean and Lady Grace. They had entered the room at almost the same moment, dressed to receive guests. The Dean gave a dinner-party that evening, and Lady Grace, as she sat at the window, observed the first carriage, as she thought, driving up to the door.

Four or five weeks have elapsed since the Dean's interview with Sir William Chant, and the sweet month of June is close at hand. The Dean has been feeling well of late; that is, he has not had any return of his malady; but he is overwhelmed with worry. Lady Grace has been extravagant this season, and her husband knows not how to defer any longer the embarrassments which creditors are pressing upon him. He has been staying at Great Whitton, and has only now been in town a day or two.

An idea has lately been forcing itself upon him which he does not like to entertain; yet, unwelcome as it is, he begins to fear he shall have to act upon it. It is that he shall disclose his position to his brother-in-law, and obtain from him seasonable help. It might take from four to five thousand pounds to extricate him from his dilemma and put him straight again; probably quite five. Then he would have to make all known to Grace and persuade her to live in quiet retirement for a time at Great Whitton, and pay back Lord Avon by degrees. But Dr. Baumgarten does not like to ask this loan of Lord Avon; one or two loans he has had already from him. The good-natured Earl has always been generous to them; apart from the Berkeley Square house he often slips a ten-pound note into his sister's hand, of which she makes no secret to her husband, and for which she hardly thanks Lord Avon. "He has no wife," remarks Lady Grace; "why should he not occasionally make me presents?"

It was to be a formal dinner-party this evening; one given yearly

by Dr. Baumgarten to a few nearly superannuated lights of the Church, who came in their mitred chariots, with their old wives beside them. It was not at all one delighted in by Lady Grace, who called the worthy people "ancient fogies." Neither Charles nor Gertrude, if at home, would have been admitted to it. Cyrus would have been still more out of his element than they. Cyrus, who would soon be on the wing again for a distant land, was paying a farewell visit to Charles at Oxford; Gertrude was spending the day with their friends in Eaton Place—the Maude-Dynevors.

"That carriage has passed out of the square; I fancied it was coming here," remarked Lady Grace as she turned from the window.

The Dean stood with his elbow leaning on the mantelpiece, the hand supporting his head. A strange weight of care sat upon his brow; so great, so strange, that it did not escape the notice of his wife.

"Is anything the matter, Ryle? You do not look well."

"Well? Oh yes; I am quite well."

"You are troubled then. What is it?"

"Nothing; it is nothing, Grace. The day has been very hot, and heat always makes me feel languid, you know."

And the Dean removed his elbow, smoothed his brow, and called up a smile, just as the first black silk apron, worn by the Bishop of Denham, came sailing in. In point of fact, the Dean had cause to show an uneasy front: a terrible blow had fallen upon him; painfully perplexing tidings that he knew not how to cope with.

But never had the Dean of Denham been more courteous, more brilliant, more alive to the duties of a host than he was that evening. He sat at the head of his board after Lady Grace had withdrawn, and the sociable old bishops admired his learning, retorted to his wit, yielded to his fascinations, and enjoyed his good wine. It was a remark amongst their lordships the next day that Baumgarten had surpassed himself. The ladies thought the same when he appeared with their lords in the drawing-room. Gertrude Baumgarten was in it then, and was singing to them some of her sweetest songs, but they forgot the songs when they listened to the Dean.

A servant was crossing the saloon with a coffee-cup; he halted for a moment near his master, and spoke in a tone imperceptible to other ears. It was Moore, who had lived so long in the family; a middle-aged man now, and quite a confidential servant.

"Mr. Fuller is come again, sir; and another gentleman with him. I have shown them into the library."

Drawing towards the door, unconsciously as it were, with a word to one, a smile for another, the Dean presently passed out of it, unnoticed, for they were engaged with their coffee, and Gertrude was singing again. In the library were two gentlemen, and further off, sitting on the edge of a handsome chair, as if handsome chairs and himself did not often come into contact with each other, was a shabby-

looking man. The man had been there for several hours, and had had substantial refreshments served to him more than once.

Mr. Fuller was the Dean's lawyer. The gentleman he had now brought with him was the Dean's banker, and the man was a sheriff's officer. The Dean of Denham had been arrested.

The Dean of Denham had been personally arrested! Such calamities have occurred to divines even higher in the Church than he. As he came up to his door that afternoon, and put his foot upon his door-sill to enter it, he was touched upon the shoulder by the man sitting now in that uneasy chair. The exclusive Dean shrank from the contaminating contact, his haughty pride rose, and he spoke severely.

"Fellow, what are you doing?"

"The Reverend Ryle Baumgarten, Dean of Denham, I believe. Sir, you are my prisoner."

Staggered, shocked, almost bewildered, he, by some process of persuasion or reasoning, induced the man to enter his house, and wait while he sent for his lawyer. The lawyer came. Arrangement appeared to be hopeless, for the Dean was worse than out of funds, and of revenues to fall back upon he had none. There was a consultation. The Dean said, receive the bishops that night, as had been decided, he must; and an awful sickness fell upon him at the prospect of going to prison. Mr. Fuller threw out a word of suggestion touching Lord Avon. But Lord Avon, as the Dean knew, had gone to Epsom races; he might not be home till midnight, if then. Mr. Fuller knew the Dean to be a man of honour, whose word was not to be questioned, and he passed it, to go quietly to his destination the following morning, provided he could remain at liberty in his house for that night.

Mr. Fuller gave an undertaking to the capturer, answering for the Dean's good faith, and the man was made at home in the library, Moore alone being cognisant of his business. Meanwhile the Dean wrote a note to his banker, of which Mr. Fuller took charge.

The banker, wishing to be courteous, answered it in person, and sat now at the library table, the Dean on one side him, the lawyer on the other. But of what use was his coming? He had been privately saying to the lawyer that he and his house were in for it too deeply as it was, and not a shilling more would they advance; no, not to keep the Dean out of purgatory, let alone out of prison. He intimated somewhat of the same now to the Dean, though in more courtly terms.

They consulted together in subdued tones, not to be audible to the man at the other end of the room, but to no earthly effect; it all came round to the same point: the Dean had neither money nor money's worth; even the very furniture of the house he was in was not his; it had been settled by Lord Avon on his sister, and the Dean's debts could not touch it. The furniture at the Deanery, the furniture at

Great Whitton Rectory was already mortgaged, as it may be said, for money which had been lent upon it ; heavy liabilities were upon him, and he had no means of meeting them : he had put off and put off the evil day, only to make it all the worse, now that it had come to this.

"I'll try to see Lord Avon in the morning ; he'll be back by that time," remarked Mr. Fuller.

"And only to find that he has gone off to Paris by to-night's train," said the Dean. "He talked of going over this week."

Nothing could be done then ; nothing whatever. The lawyer was unable to help, the banker would not do so, and the conference closed. Mr. Fuller promised to be there again in the morning. Dr. Baumgarten, upon thorns in more ways than one, went back to his wondering bishops, the comforting assurance that he must surrender the next morning playing havoc with his brain.

"Oh, here's the Dean at last. Lady Grace feared you must be taken ill."

"Never in better health in my life," laughed the Dean, gaily. "I was summoned to the library on business : people will come at troublesome times. Your lordship is winning, I see ; a knight and a castle already ; fair trophies ; but Lady Grace generally contrives to lose all before her, when she attempts chess."

The guests departed at the sober hour of eleven, and Lady Grace immediately prepared to go to her dressing-room. The Dean had been making up his mind to tell her while he talked to the bishops. "A glib tongue covers an aching heart"—how runs the proverb ? In all the world perhaps there could not have been found that night a more aching heart than Ryle Baumgarten's. The time had come when his wife must know, and the telling would be to him as a very bitter pill.

"Grace, don't go up just yet. Good-night, Gertrude ; run on, my dear."

"Good-night, dear papa."

"Ryle !" uttered Lady Grace as the door closed ; "you are not well. I am sure of it. Something must be wrong. What *were* you doing when you were out of the room so long to-night ?"

The Dean leaned against the wall by the side of the fireplace, all his assumed bravery gone out of him. When the spirits have been forced for hours, the revulsion is sometimes terrible. She went up to him in alarm, and placed her hands upon him. He took them in his own.

"Yes, Grace, something is wrong. It seems," he added, with a ghastly face, "as if I should almost die in telling you of it."

Her lips turned whiter than his, and her voice sank to a dread whisper. "Something has happened to Charles !"

"No, no ; the children are all safe ; it has nothing to do with them. It has to do with myself alone : and—with you—in a degree—as part of myself."

"Ryle, you are ill," she faintly said. "You have some disorder that you are concealing from me. Why do you keep me in suspense?"

"Ill in mind, Grace. Oh, my wife, how shall I tell you that I have been an embarrassed man for years, and that now the blow has fallen."

She shivered inwardly, but would not let it be seen. "What is the blow?"

"I am arrested. I must go to prison to-morrow morning."

So little was Lady Grace familiar with "arrests" and "prisons," that she could not at once comprehend him; and when she did so, the popular belief seemed to be in her mind that a Dean, so enshrined in divinity and dignity, could never be made an inmate of a prison. The first emotion passed, they sat down close together on the sofa, and Grace poured forth question upon question. What had brought it on? How much did they owe? Why didn't he tell the lawyers to settle it?

Puzzling questions, all, for the Dean to answer. It had been coming on too long for him to be able to trace "what" had brought it on, except that they had lived at too great an expense. Little by little, step by step, the grain of sand had grown to a desert. How much they owed he could not precisely say; and oh! the mockery of the innocent remark: "Why didn't he tell the lawyers to settle it?"

"Ryle!" she suddenly exclaimed, "you had an advance from the bankers a day or two ago. I saw you draw a cheque for two hundred and twenty pounds—don't you remember? I came in as you were writing it. Is that all gone?"

"It was the last cheque they cashed—the last they would cash. The money was not for myself."

"For whom, then?"

"That is of no importance. It is gone."

"But you must tell me. You know, Ryle, now that it has come to this pass, you must not keep me in the dark. I must know how much you owe, and how the money has gone, and the right and the wrong of everything. Of course, there's nothing to be done now but to get Henry to help us; and if he won't, or can't do so, we must raise money upon my property. What did that two hundred and twenty pounds go in?"

"Arrests seem to be running in the family just now," observed the Dean, with a bitter smile. "Cyras—Cyras—well, I had to give that cheque to Cyras to get rid of a little trouble. It was not much, Grace; as a drop of water to the ocean."

Whether as a drop, or a bucket, it seemed to freeze Lady Grace. "Cyras!" she ejaculated, scornfully. "What *right* have you to help him when you cannot afford to do it? I shall tell Cyras what I think of his despicable conduct."

"Don't do that, Grace. The trouble was not Cyras's. He has not had a shilling from me."

"You have just said he had that cheque."

"Yes—to extricate another."

"Another?" echoed Lady Grace, looking at him. "It was not—Oh, Ryle! it surely was not Charles?"

"Yes it was," said the Dean, in a low, sad tone. "He got into debt, and Cyrus took my cheque to Oxford to release him. No one can be more repentant than Charles is; I do not think it will ever happen again. It was not his fault; he was drawn into it by others. I had the nicest possible letter from him this morning: he says it will be a life's lesson to him. I believe it will. There—let us leave Charles's affairs for mine. Grace, this blow will kill me."

"If you went to prison it would be quite enough to kill you; but that cannot be thought of. As a last resource, money, I say, must be raised on my property."

"My dear, I thought you knew better than that. It is yours for your life only, and then it descends to your children. The Lord Chancellor himself could not raise a shilling upon it."

Lady Grace started up. "Is it so? Then what in the world is to be done?"

He did not say what: he foresaw too well, and his countenance betrayed it. She put her arm round his neck.

"No, Ryle, dearest, you never shall: there shall be no prison for you whilst I live. I will be back in an hour."

"Why, where are you going?" he exclaimed.

"To my brother. A cab will take me there in safety. He must manage this. Now, don't attempt to stop me, Ryle; what harm could I come to? If you are afraid it might do so, come with me."

"I wish I could. I am a prisoner."

"A prisoner!" she ejaculated. "Here, in your own house?"

"I may not quit it, except to exchange it for a prison. But, my dear, listen to reason. You are not likely to find your brother at this hour of the night; perhaps he is not even back from the races. Fuller will see after him in the morning."

"I shall go and find him now," she persisted.

She had a bonnet and shawl brought down, and a man-servant was ordered to attend her: not Moore, who could not be spared from home. For once in her life Lady Grace condescended a word of explanation. "She had business with Lord Avon, and the Dean felt too unwell to accompany her." She remembered one important item of information she was ignorant of, and went back to ask it.

"Ryle, how much are you arrested for?"

"The sum that I am arrested for is about four hundred pounds. But now that this crisis has come, I shall not escape without making arrangements to pay all I owe," added the Dean.

"And how much is it in the whole?"

"Close upon five thousand pounds."

Grace looked at him; he was sitting back in the large chair

almost, as it seemed to her, gasping for breath. She saw how much the confession had shaken him. Running across the room, she kissed him fondly.

"Don't distress yourself, my husband. Henry will see that all comes right. I'll make him do so."

The man who had been bidden to attend her stood at the cab door, holding it open. As Lady Grace took her seat the thought crossed her that she would not take the man; servants find out things so quickly.

"Richard, I think I shall not want you," she said. "I will go alone. Tell the man where to drive to—Lord Avon's."

So Lady Grace went alone to the Earl's residence in Piccadilly. He was not at home. His valet thought he might be at the club; he had heard his lordship talking with a friend about dining there when they got back from Epsom.

Away to the club went Lady Grace. The hall-porter, who was airing himself on the steps, watched the cab stop, saw a lady looking out of it, and condescended to go down to it and see what she wanted.

Yes, the Earl was there, he and some other noblemen had been dining together. Lady Grace sent a message, which the porter took in and delivered.

A lady in a cab was waiting to see his lordship. She wished him to come to her immediately.

A titter went round the table, and the earl exploded a little at the porter. What the deuce? A lady to see him? What next? Who was she?

The porter could not say anything about her except that she was in a cab.

"What's her name?" returned the Earl. "Impudence? Go and ask."

The man went and came back again, interrupting the chaff which was then in full swing round the table. It dropped to silence, awaiting the announcement.

"It is Lady Grace Baumgarten, my lord."

Lord Avon gave a prolonged stare, and then hurried out. A youngster at the table began to take liberties with Lady Grace's name.

"Hold your silly tongue, you young fool," reprimanded an older man. "Don't you know that the Lady Grace is his sister and the wife of the Dean of Denham?"

"Oh!" said the young fellow, feeling that he should like to sink into his shoes.

"Why, Grace, what's up now?" cried Lord Avon, as he approached the cab. "Is Berkeley Square on fire? Or is Baumgarten made Primate of All England?"

"Come inside, Henry, for a minute; I want to speak to you. The Dean's arrested for five thousand pounds."

"Oh, is he?" equably returned Lord Avon. "He has been a clever fellow to keep out of it so long. No one but a Dean could have done it."

"And you must find the money to release him."

"Anything else?" inquired Lord Avon.

"You *will* find it, Henry: you must."

"Look here, Grace," said the Earl. "Thousands are not so plentiful with me: but if they were, and I went to the spunging house to-night, and paid the money down, there'd be the same to do over and over again to-morrow."

"No, there would not—but there's no time to explain. Went to where, did you say?"

"Where's he taken to?"

"He is at home. They have gone out of their usual way, he said, and allowed him to be at home to-night: a man is there, and will take him away in the morning. Henry, it must not be; you must come to his aid."

"What I can do will not be of much use, I fear. I know more of Baumgarten's affairs than you do; in fact I have already helped him out of one or two pits; though of course things have been kept from you."

"Whilst I have been the culprit, I expect. It is my extravagance that has brought this about, not his. Only fancy, Henry! We had a lot of the old bishops to dinner to-night, and Ryle sat at the table just as usual, knowing he was virtually a prisoner, whilst the wicked man, his capturer, was waiting for him in the library!"

"A fine state of things!"

"You must help him out of it. The Dean of Denham can't go to prison; such a scandal never was heard of. Henry, I won't stir from your side, this night, till you give me the money."

"Where am I to get it from?" quietly asked the Earl. "The birds of the air?"

"Nonsense. You possess a cheque-book, I suppose?"

"I don't carry it about with me. All this comes of marrying a parson. In position, Baumgarten was beneath you ——"

"Hold your tongue," interrupted Lady Grace. "He is an honour to the family: and I know, if he has lived beyond his means, it has been for my sake. Will you go home with me now, and talk things over with him?"

"No," said the Earl; "I can't to-night. What with the day's racing and the dinner after it, I'm tired to death: fit for nothing. I'll be in Berkeley Square the first thing in the morning, and see what can be done."

"What time? By nine o'clock? Even that may be too late."

"I'll be there by eight."

"You won't fail me, Henry?" she said in an imploring tone.

"I will not fail you, Grace. And I'll get Baumgarten out of the mess if I can, for I like him. Good-night!"

Lady Grace returned home. She was entering the drawing-room, when the butler, Moore, came suddenly out of it to meet her, and in a very unbutler-like way closed the door in her face to prevent her entrance. His usually florid complexion had turned yellow, and he spoke in a flurry, as if not weighing his words.

"Oh, my lady—not in there, please."

Lady Grace wondered if Moore had been visiting the decanters. "Open the door," she calmly said. "Is the Dean there still?"

But Moore held the handle firmly. "I beg your pardon, my lady, you must not go in."

She was alarmed now: she saw the man's agitation. "My lady, the Dean is taken ill," continued Moore, "that's the truth. I thought your ladyship had best not see him."

She waved him aside in her wilful manner: he would have had to give way. But at that moment the door was opened from within and Cyrus came out. He had just got back from Oxford, and it was his arrival which had brought about the discovery that something was amiss with the Dean.

"I am going for a doctor, mamma," said Cyrus, and leaped away. Lady Grace went in, and Moore followed her.

Leaning back in a low easy chair, almost at full length, his head resting on the back of it, lay the Dean. His face was white, his mouth was open, but his eyes were closed, as if in a calm sleep. Nevertheless, there was that in his face which struck terror to the heart of his wife. She touched the faithful old servant on the arm and cried aloud.

"Yes, my lady," he whispered, believing that she saw as well as he: "I fear it is death."

Lady Grace knelt down, and clasped her hands round her husband. In that moment of distress, what cared she who was present? She called him by endearing names, she kissed his face, she besought him to speak to her. But there was no answering response, and conviction told her that there never would be again.

Never in this world. Cyrus came back with a doctor; curiously enough, it was Sir William Chant. Sir William had been quietly walking home from a whist party at a friend's house, when Cyrus met him.

A small mercy this, for Sir William was able to testify to the cause of death, thereby avoiding an inquest.

The Dean had died from disease of the heart, brought on by the evening's excitement. And the world, next day, was busy with the news that the Very Reverend Ryle Baumgarten had been gathered to his fathers, and that the rich Deanery of Denham, richer in those days than in these, was in the clerical market.

(To be continued.)

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

In Memoriam.

IF last month my task was delicate and painful, it is almost more so in the present instance.

Then I had to speak of one who had passed away from all earthly scenes and influence. If I had to praise, it could no longer affect her. If I had to declare the beauty of her perfect and spotless life, it could not reach her. We may call upon her name but she will not answer. The last sigh has been breathed, the last heart-beat is over, the beautiful eyes will be no more seen. For her, Death is swallowed up in Victory. The Cross has been borne, and the Crown is won. She has kept the Faith, she has finished her course, and henceforth there is laid up for her a treasure in the Heavens. But for those that remain, the path of life is darkened and made desolate.

But to-day I have to speak also of her works, which exist as a legacy to her country, a memorial of herself. In referring to them, it will be impossible to do so without a certain praise, where praise is due. Again it would seem more appropriate to have come from some other hand, but again no other hand exists. Her works were so much a part of her life, she is so personally interwoven with her writings, that, in a memoir, the one cannot be separated from the other: allusion to the books brings constant reference to the writer.

I trust, therefore, it may be felt that where I have praised, it is from no spirit of egotism. If in her works, my mother had risen to heights never before attained by man or woman, we should still have felt that she was herself immeasurably above all earthly fame and success. This, compared with her, was as nothing. Our pride and happiness was in herself. She sanctified the home she adorned. In her withdrawal a bright and shining light has gone out, leaving only the greater darkness for those who mourn. The silence and sorrow are deeper now than when the blow first fell, but this must ever be.

As regards the writer, her presence to him is more real, her voice—that soft and silvery voice—more audible than ever. The indescribable loveliness of her face is ever visible, with that earnest, intent gaze, that riveted and even dazzled by its charm. In the dark hours of the night, it is there; underlying life's daily work, it is there also. If withdrawn for a season by ordinary cares and responsibilities, by the passing influence of companionship, or the converse of a close friend, it is only to flash back again more vividly than ever, on each return to solitude.

Yet it must not be imagined that he would restore her again from the Crown she has won to the Cross of earth. King David said of

his child : " I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me : " and in this lies all consolation. As a poet has lately written of her in words that are so true :

" Work done, toil over, sounds the curfew's knell,
Comes Home and Welcome, folded hands and rest ;
Sweet through the silence throbs the '*All is well* :'
And GOD'S OWN SLEEP has hushed the peaceful breast."

From that Sleep and Rest, who would bring her back to earth ?
" Life is perfected by Death."

An intimate friend and one of the most learned of divines, was wont to say : " Whatever of greatness or beauty or charm there is in Mrs. Henry Wood's heroines, she herself infinitely surpasses them all." And again he would add : " She had persuaded him into the belief that as there had been religious inspiration in the past, so there was secular inspiration also in the present." This was the opinion of one who had spent his life amongst princes, and had seen more of the world and human nature than most of his kind.

It was all too true. And therefore I wish it to be realised that infinitely before and above all other considerations, we place HERSELF ; her loveliness ; the beauty of her life and character : that beauty of holiness which was pre-eminently hers : which remain as the one hope and consolation. If I seem occasionally to repeat myself, or to allude over and over again to certain of her distinguishing traits and virtues, it is that I wish to impress them upon the reader, and bring them vividly before him. Only by reiteration can this be done. We have to read a lesson ten times over before we know it by heart. Only thus can the reader be enabled, even in a slight degree, to see and know her as she was. If the rare beauty of her life is insisted upon, it is that it may be the more realised, for to some one or to some other it may perchance be a help and an encouragement. There is so little to be seen of this perfect and unfailing CONSISTENCY. It is so rarely that we come upon one for whose sake we will hold the world GOOD. She is indeed of those who being dead yet speak. In the words of King Lemuel : " Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all." And again with St. Paul to Philemon : " Thou wilt also do more than I say." For she rose far above all earthly limitations of what we call DUTY.

These few words have seemed to me necessary. I think it may now be understood that any praise occurring in the following pages arises from the necessity of the case, a rendering of justice. At the present moment, to a spirit seeking rest and finding none, from a sense of a loss which neither time nor change can ever fill again, all praise, even the very highest, falls cold and lifeless under the pen. It can bring no relief except as fulfilling a part of its task ; a rendering of honour to whom honour is due ; the accomplishment of the work in hand.

II.

IT was said of Mrs. Henry Wood, as it was once said of Lord Byron, that she awoke one morning to find herself famous. This was to a great extent true. Though *East Lynne* had been out some little time, had been unusually well reviewed, and was already popular, it was only the review in the *Times* that set the whole world talking and reading about it. This review also created such a demand for the book that Messrs. Spottiswoode set to work night and day to reprint it for Mr. Bentley, and one edition after another was quickly exhausted.

Though only a young boy at the time, I remember that morning well. We were then in England, and my father, who, as already remarked, was a great politician, could scarcely have taken his breakfast without the help of his beloved *Times*. True, Parliament had not yet assembled, but it was about to do so, and the bugle notes were already sounding for battle.

The paper happened to be a little late that morning, and we were already seated at the table when it was brought in. On taking it up, on the outer column of the page, the first thing that struck his eye was the heading "EAST LYNNE," followed by a long and glowing notice.

"*East Lynne*," he remarked quietly, looking across at my mother. "The *Times* gives it a long review, this morning."

I remember jumping up in wild excitement, and leaning over his shoulder whilst he read it through, not aloud, but silently. The calmest of the three present was the one most interested: the author of the book. I had looked at her when the circumstance was mentioned, and saw the flush of sudden emotion pass and repass, wavelike, over her beautiful face. She had been wondering whether the *Times* would review it; hoping it would do so; so much depended upon it. Yet, when it came, she received it, as she did all other things in life, whether for good or for ill, calmly and quietly: the calmness of very deep feeling. Though her anxiety to know what was said was as intense as her interest, she remained seated and asked no question, until my father, having read to the end, rose and handed the paper to her.

"Forgive me," he then said. "I felt compelled to finish it, and fear I forgot that your interest in it must be even greater than mine."

She took the paper from his hand with her very rare smile and glance, and read the review without remark: and no one could tell what was passing in her mind.

In those days reviews were very different from reviews in these, and were much more powerful in their effect. A great review in the *Times* then made the fortune of a book and established the fame of its writer. This was no doubt chiefly due to the fact that the *Times* only gave exceptional reviews in very rare instances.

It would not do so to-day: there are too many writers and too many books to be noticed.

From a literary point of view, as well as from many other points, I think it may be said that the age is a little out of joint. Where one person wrote when *East Lynne* appeared, probably two or three hundred write now. In those days, and before them, writing was chiefly confined to those who felt within them "the sacred fire;" now it seems to be taken up as a profession, like Law, Physic, or the Church. This wholesale production, for some good reason we need not enter into here, seems generally rather fatal to the literature of a country.

I have heard it said that the two great reviews of the latter half of the present century—great in the effects they produced—have been those of *Adam Bede* and *East Lynne*; causing these works to stand out above all others that have appeared.

In the instance of *East Lynne*, the success has certainly been permanent. It is in greater demand now than when it first came out, and is even more popular. As a proof of this, it will not, I hope, seem invidious to record that, though the work has never been published under the price of six shillings, an edition never consists of less than ten thousand copies, and in most years the book has to be reprinted.

I think there could scarcely be a greater test than this to lasting popularity, after a lapse of more than twenty-five years. Some two or three years ago, Mr. Bentley remarked to me that no book of modern times had met with the success of *East Lynne*.

It was my mother's first long work, but she had written much before it appeared.

III.

FOR some years, whilst living abroad, she had every month, and month by month, contributed short stories to two of the leading periodicals of the day: *Bentley's Miscellany* and *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*.

At that time, Mr. Harrison Ainsworth was the proprietor of these magazines. For long my mother wrote without any remuneration: wrote out of love for her work, as Mr. Ainsworth made no return for the stories that were really keeping up his periodicals. At length, she declared her unwillingness to continue to send these contributions to him month after month and year after year, unless he made her some acknowledgment for them.

Mr. Ainsworth then agreed to the payment of a small yearly sum: so small indeed that the original arrangement could scarcely be said to have been disturbed.

His cousin, William Francis Ainsworth, was then part editor of these magazines, and to him all my mother's MSS. were forwarded, and most of the correspondence was carried on between them. This

correspondence was ever of the most pleasant and cordial description. Mr. Francis Ainsworth was a traveller, a gentleman, a man of large sympathies, and was altogether possessed of a very different tone of mind from his cousin, Harrison Ainsworth. His acquaintance with my mother was almost limited to letters, for she was living abroad, and Francis Ainsworth had ceased to travel. But on the rare visits my mother paid to England, she never failed to spend an afternoon or evening with Mr. and Mrs. Ainsworth at Hammersmith: visits which always left behind them a very agreeable recollection. On these occasions, Harrison Ainsworth was sometimes also a guest.

In my previous paper, I have mentioned Mr. Francis Ainsworth's contributions to these magazines, in the form of essays and miscellaneous articles. On referring to them, I am surprised at their interest; the powers of memory and research they betrayed. They were too good to be buried in the pages of a magazine and thrown aside from month to month. These papers ought to have been republished in book form and given a permanent place on one's bookshelves; but I do not think this was ever done.

On looking over some of Francis Ainsworth's old letters, I come upon the following passage in one of them. My mother had then been writing for some years for both magazines. The passage begins the letter:

"MY DEAR MRS. WOOD,—Whence comes this deep well of the imagination, that, the more you draw from it, the fresher and more sparkling becomes the pure water?"

Nevertheless, this constant drawing of pure and sparkling water was a very great strain even upon the deepest well and the most fertile imagination, and my mother more than once wrote to Mr. Harrison Ainsworth and told him so. She felt that it was a waste of good material. Many of these short stories contained the germ of what, elaborated and worked out, would have made a long novel.

She several times wrote to Harrison Ainsworth, begging him to allow her to write a novel in place of these monthly stories; but he would not consent to the change.

Let the reader conceive the tax and drain upon mind and imagination, of having to write, year after year, twenty-four short stories, each complete in itself, and of doing this for ten years before *East Lynne* was written. Then let him think of all the work that has followed *East Lynne*; the acknowledged work; the anonymous stories under the name of JOHNNY LUDLOW; the immense amount of anonymous literary work written in addition for the ARGOSY, that was never known and never will be known. When all this is considered, I think it will be admitted that a more fertile brain never existed; that she had more ideality, a far greater creative power for plot and dramatic situations than any other writer of her sex.

The marvel is that the frail body was not worn out long before its

time. But the intense activity and energy of mind, the fire of genius, which all true writers possess, triumphed over all weaknesses, and burnt on to the end with undiminished vigour. In her case, the flame was suddenly extinguished in its full light; it did not flicker and die out.

Let us take "JOHNNY LUDLOW" as an example of her power and energy.

For nearly twenty years, she has written these stories in rapid succession. The same thread runs through all. The same characters appear, disappear, and reappear upon the scene. The field was therefore limited to certain restrictions. Yet, to the very last, there was no falling off in vigour or interest, or in dramatic action. "Caramel Cottage," one of the very last, is also one of the best. The stories form a great crowd and company of people, each endowed with life, each standing out, separately and distinctly, from the other.

Three long books, three series, have been republished from the *ARGOSY*; and enough material remains, published, or to be published, for three more series. Six series; equal to six long novels. Yet, much as she loved JOHNNY LUDLOW, and delighted in him; lived in the midst of this crowd of friends she had gathered about her, until their existence seemed to her a positive reality; she yet ever considered the writing of these papers as apart from her ordinary occupation—a rest and recreation from her other work.

The brain never failed or grew exhausted. It was the body that at last conquered, and caused the pen to fall from the hand. The last time she ever took it up was to sign a cheque which another hand had been obliged to fill in. It was only two days before the end. She did it with her accustomed firmness and determination never to give in, never to yield. Nevertheless the hand was failing; and when the cheque was presented to the clerk at Herries' Bank, he remarked, after looking at it for some moments: "Mrs. Henry Wood must indeed be very ill!"

As a proof of her unfailing powers, I remember her saying to me, one day last year, with that sad intonation of the voice we all give to things departed and departing:

"I could now sit down and compose a hundred plots, if I only had the strength to work them out."

If she had had ten right hands in place of one, her brain would have found sufficient work for all. It has occasionally been said that she was helped in her work—even as it was said of Dumas, that he dictated his novels four or five at a time, and also adapted the work of young aspirants and brought it out as his own, openly and candidly. It is, perhaps, beneath one's dignity to allude to such an assertion or rumour in connection with Mrs. Henry Wood. After the record in last month's *ARGOSY*, if it has not quite missed its mark, it will be realised that she was incapable of anything but the strictest uprightness and integrity, carried out all through life, not only in

the spirit but in the letter ; in the very smallest actions as well as the greatest and most important. That a single line should ever have appeared under her name that was not absolutely her own work, would have been as impossible to her nature as for the sun to stand still in his course.

She occasionally received offers of plots and materials from strangers, but these were ever politely declined ; a refusal which sometimes created indignant surprise in those who had made the proposal. One applicant, I remember, wrote, in reply, her persuasion that Mrs. Henry Wood was the most jealous of living authors ; with other remarks too insolent to be brought under Mrs. Henry Wood's notice. The letter fulfilled its destiny in the flames. But how far was such an assertion from the truth ! No one ever rejoiced so much in the evidence of new and real talent. No one ever gave more encouragement to young writers, where she thought she discerned evidence of promise in the future. She was as destitute of jealousy as her pure and noble mind was free from all the meaner passions of mankind.

Perhaps, therefore, I may here affirm that everything that ever appeared under Mrs. Henry Wood's name was her own ; and, moreover, that every line of hers that ever appeared in print was written by her own untiring hand. That hand was so delicate that anything but the gentlest clasp would cause her pain for hours afterwards ; yet no hand has ever been more industrious and indefatigable, and few hands have done as much work. She never in her life dictated a single word, and never employed an amanuensis even for the most ordinary note.

For the rest, there is the internal evidence of her own books. Every writer of genius possesses a marked individuality impossible to reproduce ; and I think the world might safely be challenged to write a single page of JOHNNY LUDLOW, for example, without the imitation being at once detected.

IV.

MANY persons have passed themselves off as Mrs. Henry Wood in private life, and occasionally the fact has been brought under my mother's notice. I remember, about five years ago, a lady, Mrs. C., coming up to her in great excitement and distress. She was an old friend, who had for my mother the greatest regard.

The previous day, an acquaintance of Mrs. C.'s, not knowing that she was Mrs. Henry Wood's friend, declared to her that she wrote every word of Mrs. Henry Wood's books.

Mrs. C. came up full of trouble. "Of course I *knew* it was a very *wicked* story, and an *impossibility*, but I was *obliged* to come and tell you," she exclaimed, speaking in the italics ladies are so fond of ; and thereupon burst into tears. My mother, on the contrary, only

met it with her usual calm smile, and assured Mrs. C. that such assertions could do harm to none but those who uttered them.

On another occasion, an acquaintance—this time a person we knew well—was taking a mutual friend into dinner at a country-house in Shropshire. Unaware that the lady upon his arm was also a friend of ours, he boldly declared that he did most of the editing of the *ARGOSY*, and wrote quite half Mrs. Henry Wood's works. This gentleman is now in Holy Orders, and a country vicar, and one may charitably hope that he has repented of the error of his ways.

On a third occasion, my sister was at a ball at Sir William Walker's, when her host brought up and introduced to her a gentleman for the next dance. At the same time, he made some playful allusion to her being Mrs. Henry Wood's daughter.

When the dance was over, the young man went up very gravely to Sir William, and said :

"That young lady cannot be genuine. She is not Mrs. Henry Wood's daughter at all. I know Mrs. Henry Wood, the author of *East Lynne*, quite well. She lives near my home in the country, and I often meet her. This young lady lives in London, and I can see plainly knows nothing about the real Mrs. Henry Wood."

Sir William, a little annoyed, but also entertained, replied :

"I can only assure you, sir, that whoever your Mrs. Henry Wood may be, she is not Mrs. Henry Wood, the author of *East Lynne*. I can further assure you, that the young lady with whom you have just been dancing is not here as my guest to-night under fictitious circumstances."

Then leaving the young man in a state of confusion worse confounded, he went up to my sister, and with humour narrated the incident, laughingly advising her to enter an action against her late partner for defamation of character.

One other occasion of misrepresentation may be recorded, but it was of a more serious nature.

Some years ago, in the course of a trial at Scarborough, a witness under examination, and, therefore, under oath, declared that he was the author of the papers signed JOHNNY LUDLOW in the *ARGOSY*.

This could not be passed over as the mere idle declarations of dishonourable men and women in private life. The lawyers conducting the case were advised that, unless the declaration so publicly made were as publicly denied, further steps would be taken.

It was at once done. The author of the assertion wrote to the papers declaring that what he had stated was untrue, and that he had never written one word of "JOHNNY LUDLOW." At the same time, he privately wrote a letter begging for mercy, which, I need not say, he received.

My mother, during her lifetime, never troubled about such matters as these, but passed them over with her usual calmness as of no importance. Nor, indeed, were they. As I have already remarked, she

ever seemed to dwell above and beyond the world, to possess an unseen source of strength, from which she gained absolute repose. Her life was never free from singular cares and troubles, but they never deprived her of her serenity ; never for a moment disturbed her faith in the Divine love, the Divine ordering of all things for the best : a faith that grew with her years and bore so much fruit. Trouble never hardened her heart, but opened it to Paradise. Whenever the hand of affliction was heaviest upon her, it only seemed the occasion for rising to greater heights of heroism. For a heroine she was, in the highest sense of the word.

V.

WHILST perfectly aware of her own power, she was always very modest about her writings, and very retiring. In the years, when contributing to Bentley's and Colburn's Magazines, not under her own name, the subject was never mentioned by her. Her intimate friends knew that she wrote, but she never talked of her writings to them ; whilst ordinary acquaintances perhaps found it out by accident, after a long period—often never found it out at all. And, in spite of the singularly bright face, sparkling with intellect ; her calm and retiring manner was so full of repose, so little self-asserting ; there was something so gentle in her clear voice and beautiful eyes, that you never guessed at the truth ; and the remark has often been made : " Mrs. Henry Wood is the last person I should have suspected of being a writer." She was indeed like the rose in appearance, but like the violet in nature : full of rare and hidden modesty and sweetness.

And in all things, the opposite to a blue stocking. An acquaintance, who had never seen her, once remarked to me that they pictured her as a tall and severe woman, wearing blue spectacles. How different from the reality ! Only this morning—April 2nd—I received a letter from one of her old friends in Paris, from which I translate the following passage :—

" I cannot believe that she is gone. It seems an impossibility. I see no change from twenty-five years ago, except in the widow's cap and the style of dressing her hair. She appears to me to have remained as lovely to the end as when I first knew her. I have before me, as I write, those large, soft, beautiful brown eyes, ever so full of intelligence and frankness, ever beaming with kindly feeling. And now—all gone ! Can it be true ? What is to become of those who are left to mourn her ? "

In the earlier years of her married life, her shyness in this one matter of writing was so great, that though she wrote to please herself, she kept her secret even from her husband, and when she heard his

footstep approaching, would hastily put away all signs of her work into her desk.

Most of what was then written, she unfortunately destroyed. As the first juice of the grape is said to be sweetest, it is possible that those earlier writings might have contained at least the germs of excellent material for future use. One of these earlier productions, I have heard her say, was an historical five-act drama in blank verse. Every line of it was consigned to the flames in her shyness ; and this she ever afterwards regretted.

VI.

I HAVE frequently been asked as to my mother's manner of writing her novels.

She first composed her plot. Having decided upon the main idea, she would next divide it into the requisite number of chapters. Each chapter was then elaborated. Every incident in every chapter was thought out and recorded, from the first chapter to the last. She never changed her plots or incidents. Once thought out, her purpose became fixed, and was never turned aside for any fresh departure or emergency that might arise in the development of the story. The drama had then become to her as real as if it had actually existed. Every minute detail of the plot was written out before a line of the story was begun. All was so elaborately sketched that anyone with sufficient power would have had no difficulty in writing the story with the plot in possession. The only difference would have been the evidence of another hand.

The plot of each novel occupied a good many pages of close, though not small, writing. It would take her, generally speaking, about three weeks to think it out from beginning to end. During those times, she could not bear the slightest interruption. But I have occasionally gone into her study, though never without being startled, almost awed, by the look upon her face. She would be at all times in a reclining chair, her paper upon her knees ; and the expression of her eyes, large, wide-opened, was so intense and absorbed, so far away, it seemed as if the spirit had wandered into some distant realm and had to be brought back to its tenement before the matter suddenly placed before her could be attended to. It, indeed, took many moments to recall her attention, elsewhere concentrated.

Only on rare or important occasions was such an intrusion ever permitted ; for the thread of her ideas once broken could very seldom be resumed the same day ; and, as she never wrote a line of anything when composing a plot, she would consider that her day had been partly lost or wasted.

Yet her sweet face never showed sign of vexation, and her sweet voice gave no word of regret or reproof.

The ability to draw out her plots so minutely and elaborately gave

her immense power in writing. Morning after morning, when she had begun upon the story itself, she had only to consult her papers to see what her work for the day must be. The whole subject was at once grasped, and stood visibly before her, as if she were actually looking upon a diorama.

It also enabled her to see clearly the end of her story from the beginning. It prevented her from making any contradictions, or omissions, or mistakes. It avoided all unnecessary crowding or hurrying at the end. Everything was gradually led up to ; every incident, main or secondary, received its appointed place and space. No character was left forgotten or undeveloped. Yet in her novels it is impossible to say that there is anything mechanical in the manner in which they are worked out. The story, on the contrary, flows onward like a drama of real life ; and one incident leads up to another as naturally as if all were the result of accident and not design.

It also enabled her to take the greatest interest in her story and in her characters. She believed in them, realised them, looked upon them as living people. To her they had as much an existence as her own friends. They were her friends. She lived an ideal life amongst them. Nothing was more real to her than her work—the people, histories and realms she created. In this lay one great secret of her power. Nothing gave her greater delight than writing.

A friend, who lunched with her not many months ago—almost her greatest and oldest friend—remarked as they met :

“How fresh and bright you look ! And yet you have been writing since half-past eight o'clock ! How weary you must be !”

“Weary !” returned my mother. “I am never weary of writing. If you only knew the intense delight it is to me !”

Another friend—in this instance a celebrated writer—one day remarked to her :

“I shall be very glad when my work is done. There will be no writing of books in Heaven—at least, I hope not.”

“I cannot enter into your feeling,” returned my mother. “If I thought that writing books would be one of my occupations in Heaven, it would give me nothing but the most intense pleasure.”

For if anyone has genius for a particular work, it cannot be exercised without a rare pleasure. This is especially true of those who create. The intense delight of feeling that but for you the world would have been poorer than it is : that you have given rise to and filled a distinct need. Perhaps this is one reason why genius is almost always modest. It recognises its high end and calling, and reverences the power it feels within itself.

As a child, my mother would write and compose stories, though no one else ever saw a line of them. When finished they were consigned to the flames. Like all youthful efforts, probably this was the best place for them. I believe she would almost as readily have died as have shown one of them even to her father—for she inherited not

only the modesty of genius but its shyness. Even as a young girl, they were a great delight to her, and no doubt a great resource. When reclining upon her couch, day after day, and year after year, they must have brightened many an hour that might otherwise have proved long and weary. There was a hidden spring within her that none knew of: far beyond and above reading and study; for the advanced mind must even then have felt its gift and power. Even her governess, whom she ever liked and valued, and who took the greatest pride and interest in those works which had appeared before she died, was never admitted into the secret of this inexhaustible well: there was no familiar council as to what should be the destiny of this knight or that heroine. Self reliance, which served her in such stead in after life, seemed to have begun even in those early days.

I have heard my mother say that she never hesitated but once in composing any plot: that was when writing out *East Lynne*. I now forget which she told me was the point in question, but it was a leading situation in the story. It caused her a great deal of deliberation. "And in the end," she added, "I decided rightly." It is certainly difficult to see how the plot of *East Lynne* could be improved or altered for the better. It overflows with dramatic action; everything indeed fits into its place as exactly as the different sections of a puzzle; and the slightest alteration would seem to interfere with the thread and flow of the narrative.

A gentleman told me not long ago that a friend of his in America was complaining of blunted feelings. "Nothing moves me," he said, "as it once did. I can neither cry nor laugh when others do, or get up any sort of excitement."

"Come with me," said his friend; and he took him to see *East Lynne*, with which, like the rest of the audience, he was much affected.

"I don't quite see your excessive insensibility," remarked his friend, as they left the theatre together.

"You have given me great relief," he returned. "I thought my feelings were dead, but to-night I have found them as much alive as ever."

VII.

MRS. HENRY WOOD was a very rapid writer. She hardly ever paused or hesitated for a word or an idea. Her thoughts flashed more quickly than the pen could record them. Up to the time of writing *East Lynne* she had been in the habit of copying everything she wrote. But *East Lynne*, partly on account of severe illness, was sent off to press as it was written: and from that time she never copied again.

Her manuscripts were exceedingly legible, clear as print; there was scarcely ever a correction or an erasure from beginning to end; until quite the last years of her life, when she began to find that she

was writing less quickly and fluently than of old. Printers were delighted to have her copy, and declared that none other was so good. To the workmen who have to decipher MS., and who are paid by the amount of work they get through and not by time, they must have been still more acceptable.

I have mentioned her remarkable memory. She could recall every line and every expression she had written ; and if, in correcting a number of the *ARGOSY* for press, a single word or expression of her own had been altered, perhaps to get in a line at the end, she never failed to discover it, and to ask a reason for the change. This was so invariably the case, that the printers never ventured upon the alteration even of an evident oversight, the change of a word or a comma, without first submitting it to her as a query.

When *George Canterbury's Will* was coming out—one of the best and most powerful of her works—after the MS. had gone in, she wished a slight change made in it. Time pressed, and it was necessary that some one should call at the printers'. I undertook to do this, if the rest could be managed. She indicated the nature of the passage, the very number of the page on which it would be found, and on what part of the page. Then writing out the fresh matter, which amounted to fifteen or twenty lines, she gave it to me.

All was found exactly as described, the new matter was substituted for the old, and the thing was done. But I thought then, as I do now, that it was a singular proof of the power of memory. That same morning, I called upon the publishers, and mentioned the circumstance to them. I remember their surprise and remark. "Here," they said, "is not only the test of a remarkable memory, but also of a true writer: one who evidently takes the deepest interest in her work."

It was about this time that we discovered one of the boldest frauds of its kind perhaps ever attempted.

Messrs. Savill and Edwards—who were blameless in the matter—were printing a penny weekly paper, which was being issued from some House in the Strand. A writer, whose name was well known, conceived the idea of taking *East Lynne*, and bringing it out in this penny paper. The proprietors and editors of course knew of the fraud ; the printers, no doubt, did not. The title of the book was changed and the name of every character ; but, with that exception, it was word for word *East Lynne*.

My mother's solicitors, Messrs. Ashurst and Morris, at once wrote to Messrs. Savill and Edwards, stating that if it were not at once stopped, and the story discontinued, an injunction would be applied for.

Messrs. Savill and Edwards replied that they had no idea of what had been going on, and much regretted the circumstance. Not only was the story discontinued, but another number of the paper itself never afterwards appeared.

The circumstance might never have been discovered—for the paper was not one at all likely to be brought under notice—but for the kindness of a young journeyman printer, who wrote to the author through Messrs. Bentley, disclosing what was going on.

By some strange mischance, his letter was accidentally mislaid or destroyed; we lost all clue to his name and address, and were never able to thank him for the service he had rendered. I fear he must have thought us less grateful than we were. If these lines should ever come under his eye, I should be glad if he would write to me, that I might return him very late but very sincere thanks for his goodness. He cannot have forgotten the circumstance. The thrilling title chosen to replace *East Lynne*, was *How could she do it?* by the author of *The Black Angel*. I fear the author of *The Black Angel* had not very far to seek for a type of his hero. The story was arrested at, I think, the fourth chapter.

VIII.

I HAVE remarked how intensely my mother enjoyed writing her own stories: and she would read and re-read them every few years, with as much pleasure as when they first appeared. In a letter received only this morning—April 2nd—from my friend Canon McCormick, he begs me to do justice to her sense of humour: “not only as seen in her books, but as manifested in life: the keenness and quickness with which she saw the point of a good joke.”

In writing her novels, there were days when she could scarcely do so for laughter. Over and over again her pen had to be laid down, until the fit had passed, only very shortly to give place to another. As a boy, I have often watched the tears of merriment—which so often were also tears of sorrow—raining from her beautiful eyes as she wrote. I alone was privileged to be with her on those occasions, for I happened to be a quiet lad and never disturbed her; with a favourite book, I would sit for hours without moving. Others, still in the nursery, were too loud and restless with the high spirits that are so good and so much more natural to childhood and youth, to be admitted into this sanctum of thought and work. I was scarcely ever absent from her: and can never forget those tears of mirth and of sorrow, that gentle flow of wonderfully sweet and silvery laughter, which so often set my childish mind wondering.

The extremes of mirth and sorrow are often united; and he who is keenly sensible to the one will be as easily moved by the other.

It was so in my mother's case; and it shows itself in her books: in none more so, perhaps, than in the alternate fun and pathos underlying her JOHNNY LUDLOW stories. In these, you are as quickly moved to tears as to laughter: and as quickly to laughter as to tears. And sometimes the two emotions are so mingled that you scarcely know which preponderates, or which to give way to.

It was so in life. No one entered more keenly into a good story of fun and humour. Her eyes would sparkle, her sweet laughter would be long and low and clear, her face would overflow with the flushes of animation. Then, when all was over, her countenance would settle down again into that look of repose which was so seldom absent ; which was neither apathy nor indifference nor want of energy, but simply suggestive of absolute rest.

IX.

IT was not often that my mother took up any social topic of the day, but, if she did so, her keen insight into the hidden motives of human nature, her common sense, the clearness of her judgment, and her vigorous mind went straight to the root of the matter. Often there came to her a proof of this, and, on two occasions, they were nearly parallel cases.

The first was in connection with *Colburn's New Monthly Magazine*. Mrs. Henry Wood at that time was writing stories that touched upon certain religious topics, and a danger that seemed threatening to England. The stories were written with great force, and went to the root of the evil, pointing out all its subtlety and danger. After a time, a deputation, interested in the dangers exposed, waited upon Mr. Francis Ainsworth and demanded the name of the author. If this were withheld, all sorts of penalties and punishments were to ensue, beginning with the blowing up of the Houses of Parliament, and ending with death and destruction to Mr. Ainsworth himself.

The name, of course, was withheld. And the Houses of Parliament are still standing and Mr. Francis Ainsworth, I am happy to say, is still alive.

The incident caused him and my mother much amusement at the time, and some lively correspondence passed between them. It occurred in the days when she was still abroad.

The second occasion happened when *A Life's Secret* was passing through one of the magazines of the Religious Tract Society. This work touches upon the evils of Strikes and Trade Unions. They were then very far from being the power they are now, but my mother clearly divined the evil they would become to the country if not checked. She foresaw that the greatest trouble would fall upon the working-men, who could not see this for themselves ; whose minds, like their lives, dated only from day to day.

The subject was vividly handled, the dangers were exposed in the course of the story : a far more effectual way of bringing anything home to people's minds than by the mere writing of essays or pamphlets, which seldom have any lasting result. Any subject dramatically placed before people ; worked out in the lives of men and women, with a realism which suggests fact rather than fiction ; reads a lesson that can only be set aside or ignored.

It was so with *A Life's Secret*. Those most concerned in Strikes and Trade Unions, most active in fanning the rising flame and spreading it over the country, demanded the name of this writer, who thus exposed hidden and interested motives, and prophesied evils to come. The House in Paternoster Row was mobbed, and the windows were threatened with destruction if the name were not given.

But it was not given; and the mob no doubt thought better of their threat, and spared the windows.

That was many years ago now, and the evils prophesied in *A Life's Secret* have not tarried.

X.

It has been said that nearly all Mrs. Henry Wood's works were written with a purpose. Yet nothing can be more mistaken. Her purpose was to interest and amuse her readers. At the same time, she always endeavoured, as far as possible, to elevate them; to raise the standard of morality; to set forth the doctrine of good and evil; to point out the two paths in life, and the consequences that must follow the adoption of either.

No other mode of writing would have been possible in one who herself so strictly and undeviatingly followed the right path; who would never have turned aside one hair's breadth, whatever the temptation; who acknowledged the guidance of a Divine Hand in her own life, day by day and year by year: in her case, indeed, so apparent, that there ever seemed about her a certain power and presence especially vouchsafed. The Divine Hand, in the ordering of her life, can be as distinctly traced as if it were visible. Not otherwise could so perfect a character have existed through shadow and sunshine, and storm and tempest, and all the troublesome waves of life by which she was frequently buffeted. Not otherwise could no mistakes have been made, as they never were made. Not otherwise could every great incident of her life have arisen at the very moment it was needed for some especial purpose, making the whole life fit in as a perfect piece of mosaic.

Very much of her private life was of too personal and intimate a nature to be made public. If this could be done, it would be found more wonderful and romantic, and fuller of dramatic situations, than any of the plots of her own books. If all could be disclosed, it would be seen that amongst the great women of the world, she was one of the very greatest, most heroic, and most enduring.

"We see with a sentiment of deep sympathy," writes Mary Howitt, from Meran, in Austrian Tyrol, "that your dear mother has just now passed to the Higher Life. A happiness for her, but a sorrow to all who loved and esteemed her; and they were many. The Divine mercy still spares me on earth; but one by one my old friends and co-labourers in the fields of literature pass on to receive their reward.

In this case, it will be great, for she always had a high and noble end in view."

"How valuable must be the record of such a life as Mrs. Henry Wood's," writes another successful author, who, unlike Mary Howitt, is still in the height of her work. "I cannot help telling you that I derive personal and spiritual help from the memory of such a life. It is something to believe in and to cling to. It has strengthened my faith, and shown me clearly those sacred 'footprints on the sands of time.'"

And yet a third writes this morning—April 3rd—one who has done much literary work in his day, and still works untiringly: "I read your Memoir in the April number shut up alone in my room, because my tears would come. What a loss is yours! and not yours alone; but still yours in a pre-eminent degree. Thousands, who never had the privilege of seeing or speaking with Mrs. Henry Wood, will feel as if they had lost a personal friend. To me, one of the chief attractions of her writings was the spirit of charming personality which pervaded them. You felt as if you actually *knew* the writer, and that to know her was to reverence her and to love her."

It follows that such a life and character could only declare themselves in the works that were to follow her, and be left as a legacy to her country. Her motive was to amuse and interest, but to do good at the same time. It is our happiest thought and consolation that not one line or word of anything she ever wrote we could wish blotted out.

But this is altogether different from writing books with "a purpose." Her purpose only revealed itself dramatically in the conduct and actions of her characters; it was never made unduly prominent to the reader, never put forward by personal reflections. No writer ever brought herself so little into her own books: she almost invariably remains out of sight. Her characters play their own parts; live, move and act for themselves.

XI.

THE two works written with a distinct purpose are *A Life's Secret* and *Danesbury House*.

The former we have touched upon. The history of the latter is as follows.

The Scottish Temperance League had advertised a prize for a story showing the evils of intemperance. An old and much valued friend of my mother's, who had once been Vicar of Great Malvern, had been intimate with Queen Adelaide, had held great appointments in the Church, one day came to her, newspaper in hand.

"My dear madam," he said, "here is work that you can do and

that you must do. No one could write it with your force and vigour ; no one could preach so eloquent a sermon."

"You are paying me a great compliment," laughed my mother, for almost the greatest preacher in the Church stood before her.

"I assure you that I mean what I say," returned her friend. "What think you of my suggestion?"

"I do not much like the idea of competing for a prize," was the reply. "It seems to me that there is always a slight want of dignity in this sort of thing."

"I fancied so, too, at the first moment," returned the Vicar. "But I now think you might dismiss that idea for the sake of the good you would do."

"You are taking too much for granted," laughed my mother once more. "I might not gain the prize."

"My dear lady," was the emphatic retort, "if you don't win the prize, never believe in me again. I would stake my reputation upon your success."

"There is another difficulty in the way," said Mrs. Henry Wood, after a moment's reflection. "This advertisement has been out some time. Scarcely a month remains of the date on which MSS. must be sent in ; I could not do it."

"I am quite sure that you could," persisted the Vicar. "You have the pen of a ready writer, and, if you begin at once, you will accomplish your task." Then turning to her husband, whose greatest friend he was, he added : "Won't you add your persuasions to mine in this matter?"

My father laughed his usual quiet laugh.

"I never influence my wife in her writings," he replied. "She knows what to do so much better than I can tell her. If she competes for this prize, I have no doubt she will succeed ; but if she feels disinclined for the attempt, I would not urge it."

The difference between my father and the Vicar was this : the one, though a learned divine, was also full of imagination, and delighted in works of that description ; whilst the other believed that politics and abstruse books of science were the levers on which the world should move.

But the Vicar won the argument. He so persuaded my mother, that she agreed to make the trial. She began the work at once, threw her whole heart and mind into a subject of which she recognised the importance. In twenty-eight days, the work was completed and sent off : and, considering the strength and thought of the book, it is an example of inconceivably rapid writing : for a portion of that twenty-eight days was devoted to composing the plot.

In due time, the award came ; and Mrs. Henry Wood, as the Vicar had predicted, was successful. But from a pecuniary point of view, it would have been far better had she failed. She received the sum of one hundred pounds for a work which has sold by hundreds of

thousands. And when some time ago this same friend wrote to the Scottish Temperance League, unknown to Mrs. Henry Wood, and said he considered that a further and much larger honorarium was due to the author of a success they could never have dreamed of in their utmost imaginations, and out of which they must have made many thousands, the Directors of the League replied in a brief note of three lines that : "They must decline making any further acknowledgment whatever to the author of *Danesbury House*, as it would be establishing a precedent."

The circumstance was afterwards related to my mother, and caused her some pain : a little from this proof of the not very liberal tendency of the League, but more that the request should have been made at all.

No one in this world was ever more unselfish and more generous in all her thoughts and dealings with others. What is vulgarly called "a bargain," she could never think of or attempt. She shrank from the very word. She was ever contented with what she received. No one ever cared less for the intrinsic merit of wealth. The love of money was never hers. Even when she felt that she had met with less than justice at the hands of others, she would greet them as gently and quietly as ever, and all was forgiven and forgotten.

Occasionally, I have ventured to remonstrate upon her too great goodness and leniency, but was ever met with the calm, beautiful smile and earnest gaze, and the remark : "It will all come right in the end."

I remember, when *East Lynne* had appeared and taken the world by storm, Harrison Ainsworth wrote and said : "I suppose, now, I shall never have another work from your pen."

With that unvarying generosity and nobleness of feeling ; that singleness of purpose, which was part of her very self ; my mother replied : "Yes, I will write you one more book." And she wrote him *The Shadow of Ashlydyat* ; really, it may be said, making him a present of it for his magazine. For a shorter book, for the same right—the right of appearing in the magazine only, after which every right reverted to the author—she received about that same time the sum of a thousand pounds : and not only on that occasion but on many other occasions also.

I think it was greater generosity than Harrison Ainsworth deserved. But my pure and perfect mother was never of the world worldly. She was ever lovely and unselfish : a nature such as we have never found. I, her constant companion from my earliest years ; who knew her more intimately than any one else on earth ; her fellow worker in all but her own writings ; I, in whom she confided, and to whom I ever went for counsel ; affirm that I have never met her equal in beauty of face and of character ; the impersonation of all that is loveliest and best on earth. This thought is the one consolation of her children in their loss, and it is their greatest heritage.

XII.

I MUST here pause, though I have left much unsaid that I had wished to record, and fear I shall yet have to tax the leniency of the reader in a further paper, for I have already exceeded the limits of this one.

But before closing this article, I should like to reply to innumerable questions as to whether or not "Lady Grace" was completed.

Yes; every line of it. In this, as in all the events of her life, my mother made no mistakes. When the pen was laid down for the last time, there was nothing to be ended.

Apart from "Lady Grace," she has left much finished work behind her. A long serial story that will go through the whole of next year's ARGOSY. A long "Johnny Ludlow" story that will go through very many months of 1889. Another long "Johnny Ludlow" that will go through many months of 1890. Various short "Johnny Ludlow" stories that will appear in 1891.

Every word of all these stories is absolutely completed and ready for the printers.

And, if I mistake not : but of this I am not certain, for I have not yet had courage to look into a secretaire that was never opened by anyone but herself, and on whose contents her own beautiful eyes last rested : there are also one or two other completed works of considerable length to add to the number.

Thus, for some years to come, her hand will be almost as visible as ever in the pages of the ARGOSY. Whilst the hand that has long been at the helm, in conjunction with her own, will still be there. But the wise counsellor ; the voice, with its sweet and silver tones ; the beautiful eyes that ever gazed with such serene affection—all this is gone. Silence remains, and unspeakable sorrow, and a task that has become lonely and must inevitably remain so.

It is singular that the title of the very last "Johnny Ludlow" story she ever wrote was "SILENT FOR EVER." I was present as she ended the last word, and, putting it aside, she said with a wistful look in the large, earnest eyes that went as a knife to the heart :

"My work is almost done. It is certain that I shall never write much more."

She never wrote another line.

Ay ; *Silent for ever* in this world. But as her pure and lovely spirit entered the Celestial realms for which it was so meet, I can only imagine the whole Company of Heaven hastening to receive her, with songs of praise, and harps attuned, and voices, ten thousand times ten thousand, ringing the raptures of welcome.

Silent for ever here, but through Heaven's eternal spaces and through the Eternity of Heaven, rejoicing for evermore.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

A LOVE STORY.

“WHY do I wear those three little balls on my watch-chain, as though I were a pawnbroker’s assistant? Well, I will tell you, Ferrers, if you will have the patience to listen to a somewhat commonplace story.”

“All right; I’ll listen. Of course there’s a woman of some sort in it, and,

‘When a woman’s in the case,
All other things, you know, give place.’

You are not the sort of fellow, though, that I should have thought capable of much sentiment. However, I dare say you hardworking men are pretty much like the rest of us, in spite of your grave and serious countenances.”

The last speaker was the Honourable Courtenay Ferrers, who, though only a younger son, was blessed with an income large enough for his present needs, and with expectations which he doubted not would suffice him for those of the future. He led that agreeable, easy-going kind of existence which can only be the lot of men endowed with comfortable means, few wants and no great ambition; and had just returned from a long expedition, of three years’ duration, to some of our more distant Colonies.

His companion, Hugh Talboys, was a man of different stamp. Having started in life with much ambition, many wants and an income uncomfortable by reason of its minuteness, he had gone to the bar with the intention of working hard and of making his way in the world.

Hard he had worked and some way he had made. Success was beginning to reward his exertions, and he was now known as a very rising and promising young barrister. But his years of work had left their trace upon his brow, and he had acquired that penetrating and somewhat stern cast of feature which, though chiefly characteristic of men of the law, is common to most men who have to read rapidly, think deeply, and speak precisely on many subjects.

At the present moment, however, his countenance wore that radiant expression which, though often seen on a woman’s face, is beheld on that of a man only when something exceptionally pleasant has befallen him, and when that something has awakened the softer feelings of his nature. In short, when he is more or less in love.

These two men had been chums at school and at college, and, though now often separated for long periods, they still maintained their old friendship. When they did meet they still exchanged confidences, even as they had done in the old schoolboy days.

At the present moment—a foggy night in December—they were

sitting over their wine, after dinner, in Talboys' chambers, chatting about things in general and themselves in particular. In the course of the evening, Ferrers, noticing three curious-looking golden balls, each of which was inscribed with a date, pendant from the chain of his friend's watch, put to him the question which led to the following narrative. Not a thrilling or exciting one; only the true story of an honest man's love. What effect it had upon Ferrers the sequel will show.

Three years ago I had rooms on the ground floor of one of those streets just out of Eaton Square, which are the resort of people who come up to town for a few weeks during the season. One day in May I discovered, by a chance meeting in the passage, that the upper part of the house, which had been empty for some time, was again tenanted.

There was nothing in any way remarkable about this, for people used to come and go at intervals, and I seldom either knew or cared who was in the house. Bachelors as a rule, are supremely indifferent to anything which does not affect themselves and their own comfort, and I was no exception to the rule. Who or what these people were did not concern me in the least. I should probably not have given them a second thought had I not noticed, in passing them, that of two girls between whom there was a strong family likeness, one was quite a brunette, while the other was extremely fair and had the loveliest blue eyes imaginable. Consequently, I did give them a second thought, and learned from the servant that the new tenants consisted of a lady, her daughter and a niece.

After this I turned back to my briefs and for a while troubled my head no more about them.

They frequently passed my window in the summer evenings, sometimes on foot, sometimes driving, and sometimes on horseback. When riding, they were always accompanied by a tall, good-looking man of the tawny moustache type, whom, from his resemblance to the military heroes of certain fashionable novels, I at once christened "The Guardsman:" a name by which I call him even now. It was evident to me from the very first that he was very much in love with the fair-haired girl, and as she was really very pretty, rode well and seemed pleased with his attentions, I began rather to envy him.

And now a somewhat odd thing happened.

At that time I was working very hard and had quite given up going out into society at all. But one afternoon Charlie Hardcastle, who used to be my fag at school, met me in the street, and said that as he was going to start for India the following morning I really must dine with him at Woolwich and go to a ball his regiment was giving that night. As he was likely to be away for some years, I consented. Very reluctantly, it is true, and only on condition that I should be allowed to return by the workmen's early train in the morning, for I had a very important case on hand just then. But I did consent, and went back to my lodgings to dress.

Just as I was leaving them, I said to the servant : " Mind you don't bolt the door to-night, for I shall be very late."

" It will be all right, sir," she replied ; " the young ladies upstairs will be late also."

" But I may not be back till five in the morning."

" The young ladies won't be back till six, sir."

" Good gracious !" said I. " Where on earth are they going ?"

" Going to a ball at Woolwich, sir."

" Hulloo," thought I to myself, " I'll try and get introduced to them and have some fun out of this. Besides which, I may, perhaps, induce them to give me a lift back in their carriage : it will be more comfortable than the workmen's train."

So off I set in high glee.

But when the time came, it was clear that the matter would not be quite so simple as I had anticipated.

There were over eleven hundred people at the ball, which made it difficult to fall in with a single person one knew at any given moment ; and, in order to carry out my project, it was necessary that I should first find someone who knew these particular girls, then find the girls themselves, and then contrive to get these several personages together at a time when they were not dancing.

How I must have bored my partners that night ! Of each and all I enquired whether they knew these damsels, and, if they did, I took them here, there, and everywhere in quest of them. But it was all to no purpose. Never could I get within ten yards of these sirens. Only two or three times, indeed, did I see them at all, and then I had no sooner manœuvred a mutual friend in their direction than, like Will-o'-the-Wisps, they flitted off.

At last I gave up the chase in despair, and as it was getting late, determined to see about departing, when that fickle goddess Fortune suddenly befriended me.

It was just before the last dance but one, and as I was winding my way to the door, I found myself alongside a man I knew who was at that moment talking to the fair one I had so long sought in vain.

To pluck at his sleeve and whisper in his ear the words " Introduce me," was the work of a moment ; and in a few seconds I was gliding over the polished floor with my right arm round the waist of the best rider and the best dancer in England, and my right shoulder within an inch of the sunniest hair and the bluest eyes you ever saw, old fellow. But what did it matter to me ! She was engaged to that Guardsman—I felt sure of that—and I had a big case to attend to in a few hours. However, I was introduced to the mother, who offered me the spare seat in the carriage, and it ended as I had wished.

On the way home I learned that they were all going back to their country place the next day, where no doubt that confounded guardsman would follow them. Still I had had my fun and secured my drive home. But those blue eyes were very sweet.

And that is what one of these golden balls is in memory of.

"Well, it is interesting," said Ferrers. "The more so, perhaps, because it reminds me of a girl whom I once knew. Perhaps I'll tell you about her some day. Meanwhile I'll light another of these cigars of yours, and we'll have the yarn about the next ball."

"Very well," replied Talboys. "But the next is a different sort of ball, as you will see, if you look at it."

"Yes, I see," said Ferrers. "It has seams round it." And then he fell to musing on certain blue eyes and golden hair and a slender figure, which a few short years ago had caused him much pain and suffering and heartache—not willingly, heaven knows, but still it was hard to bear and had taken long to cure. He wondered where she was now, and what she had been doing all this time, and whether she had changed her name. But his thoughts were interrupted by Talboys, who continued his story as follows :

A year afterwards I was down in Yorkshire playing cricket for the Rambling Rovers against a local team, and we had just got two of our adversaries out, when a big, well-built Yorkshireman walked up to the wicket, looking very much as if he meant making runs. I thought I had seen him before, somewhere, and, after searching my memory for a few moments, recognised in him my old friend the Guardsman. This circumstance carried me back to the days of which I have been telling you, and I began to speculate as to whether he was yet married to my blue-eyed partner ; and whether she was as lovable now as then ; and whether they pulled well together ; and whether he was kind to her ; and —— At that moment he hit a ball hard to square leg where I was musing instead of fielding ; it caught me on the temple almost before I had time to see it, and down I dropped insensible.

When I recovered consciousness I found myself in a darkened room, but my memory was a blank. There was the dim, indistinct figure of a man standing near me, who, hearing me mutter "Where am I ?" came and bent over the bed on which I lay, peered into my eyes attentively for a few moments, and then ejaculated, with a sigh of relief : "Thank Heaven !"

Then he told me, in a gentle voice, that I had been very ill for more than a fortnight ; that the doctors had been doubtful as to whether I should ever again recover consciousness ; that if I had died he would have been unhappy for life, since he was the author of the accident ; but that now it was clear the crisis was over, and that I was in his house and should be well taken care of.

Well taken care of I was. My strength began to return so rapidly that within a week I was strong enough to be dressed, put into a chair, and wheeled into the next room.

Arrived there, the Guardsman, who appeared to me hardly ever to have been absent from my bedside, said that having some little

business to attend to, which would take him away for a short while, he would send his wife up to amuse me during the interval.

Till now I had seen no one but himself, the doctor and the nurse, and I began to wonder whether my surmise would prove correct that in his wife I should find my partner of the penultimate dance at that Woolwich ball.

My doubts—if I really had any—were soon set at rest, for in a few minutes there was a sound of light footsteps on the stairs, a rustle of a dress on the landing, a gentle tap at the door, and in walked the identical lady closely followed by her dark-eyed cousin.

"I knew I was right," said she, to her cousin; echoing, as it were, my own thoughts.

Then, coming over to where I sat propped up in my big chair, they both of them commiserated with me on my forlorn condition, regretted the accident which had laid me low, and expressed themselves so sweetly concerned about my recovery that I began to think my lot was not so very bad after all. There are many things that are better than the proverbial poke in the eye with a window shutter, and this was one of them.

They went on chatting and trying to amuse me with such success that an hour was gone in no time, and I felt myself progressing rapidly under their treatment. We talked, of course, about the circumstances of our previous meeting, and I was hypocritical enough to try to lead them to believe that my sole object in seeking the introduction was to get driven home that night. But the dark eyes looked somewhat incredulous.

At last I said to the fair one: "What was it you were right about when you came into the room?"

"About you," she replied, archly. "All Annie and I could learn was that you were *a* Mr. Talboys, and we used to wonder whether you were the same Mr. Talboys who came back with us from that ball. Annie said 'No,' and I said 'Yes.' And I was right, you see," added she, with a smile of satisfaction.

A masculine step was now heard on the stairs, and the husband appeared.

"I hope these prattlers have not been wearying you, Talboys," said he. "I must turn them out now, in any case, for the doctor will be here in a minute."

The black eyes and the blue both looked at me very pleasantly as they said: "Good-bye, for the present; we shall come and see you again to-morrow." But it was the blue eyes which struck me as being the most bewitching, and there was a depth of tenderness in them which made me think to myself: "What a lucky fellow your husband is."

This was the last I saw of them, however, for a long time. That very afternoon they were both summoned to the bedside of their grandmother, who had been suddenly seized with a paralytic stroke,

which put her in great danger, and necessitated their immediate presence. She was seriously ill, and lingered on in a precarious condition for some weeks, and I was back in town before they returned.

But one day, not long after this visit, I was telling my friend, who happened to be in town, the story of my introduction to his wife, and concluded by saying I looked upon him as a man to be envied.

"As how?" asked he.

"Why, in being the husband of ——"

"Well, perhaps I am," he interrupted. "Certainly I have the dearest little wife in creation."

"I have a great belief in eyes, you know," said I, "and in spite of the popular adage about dark eyes. I believe there is more steadfastness and earnestness and truth and reliability in the calumniated fair hair and blue eyes of the North than in the black eyes of the South."

"Possibly there may be," he said, hesitatingly. "I don't exactly see the appositeness of the remark."

"Why, your wife has the most beautiful blue eyes I ever saw."

"My wife?" he exclaimed, and then, looking at me fixedly for a moment, he added: "Do you know, old fellow, I am afraid you are not so much recovered as we thought. My wife's eyes are a very dark brown."

"What! Why isn't —— Then who is the lady with fair hair and blue eyes that we have been talking about all this time?"

"Talking about all this time? Oh, I see now. You must mean —— Why, that's my sister!"

Ferrers hereupon removed his cigar from his lips and remarked sententiously:

"There's nothing like a clever man for running his head hard against a millstone occasionally. A woman would never have made such a mistake, nor indeed would a man of ordinary stupidity. The chances are that when you first saw these people the brother's attention to his sister was due either to a desire to conceal from the world at large his real feelings for the cousin."

"Ah; it is all very well to be wise after the event," laughed Talboys; "but I dare say you are right."

"Not a doubt of it," replied Ferrers. "But go on with your story."

"You're not tired of it?"

"Not a bit."

"Then here goes."

Another year had gone and I was again in the same house, and was spending the last days of the Long Vacation, sometimes trudging across stubble and through turnips after partridges, sometimes walking over the most invigorating of Yorkshire moors after grouse.

It was the most delightful autumn I ever remember. Never before had I seen the heather so purple, or the grouse so plentiful. Never before had I felt the air so bracing or my spirits so buoyant. Never before had I experienced so completely that feeling of spiritual intoxication, which is the combined result of dry moorland breezes, bright days, brilliant landscapes, healthy exercise, a good digestion, agreeable companions and a pleasant house.

My visit was now drawing to a close, and I began to feel a reluctance I had never felt before at having to exchange the soul-inspiring hills of Yorkshire, the sweet fresh air of the country and the peaceful, placid life of a country house, for the depressing chimney-pots of London, the fog and smoke of the town, and the bustling anxieties of a crowded city. My friend's golden-haired sister had been staying with him during the period of my visit, and she and I had become great allies. Somehow or other we were always partners in any games that were going on—whether it was tennis, or whist, or four-handed billiards, or any of the other entertainments which were used to chase the fleeting hours. Not the least cause of my reluctance to depart was the thought that I should miss that merry laugh, those fascinating eyes, those rosy lips and that sweet-toned voice.

As the final day came nearer and nearer, I felt that her presence had become, as it were, a part of my existence. And then I began to wonder whether she would regret my departure, and whether she would miss me, and whether all her little amiabilities had been nothing more than she would have shown to any other guest in her brother's house.

Men are bad hands at solving such riddles as these and always doubt their own powers of perception, when they attempt to penetrate the mysteries of a woman's heart. The ordinary rules by which intentions are divined cease to apply, and a man becomes like a toy boat on a ruffled lake, tossed hither and thither; now sailing upright, now heeling over on this side, now on that, but making no way whatever.

The last day of my visit arrived and I was no nearer the solution of my problem than before. I did not dare to ask a definite question lest my hopes might be suddenly dashed to the ground; yet I feared to go away without arriving at some sort of understanding. I was in a sea of doubt. If I asked and were rejected, I should be miserable: if I said nothing she might think I was a mere trifler. I should have liked to let things drift a little—to have allowed them to go on just as they were for a while. But this was impossible. I must start on the morrow.

At last it ended in this wise. After a short tramp round the home farm on the chance of putting up a bird or two and having a parting shot, I returned to the house, exchanged my shooting garb for more conventional attire, and entered the drawing-room just as the setting

sun was beginning to paint shadows on the Western hills, draw lines upon the lawns and change the purple of the upland heather to a deep crimson.

There I found my fairy charmer all alone, with the rays of an autumn sunset giving additional lustre to the golden halo of her head. She was busily engaged in winding wool, and did not refuse my proffered assistance in the task. As she wound and wound and wound, and her fairy hands flitted backwards and forwards before my outstretched arms, I could not resist every now and then taking a stealthy glance at those clear blue eyes. At every glance I became more and more bewitched, while the skein, I fear, became more and more entangled.

But her nimble and taper fingers quickly undid the knots, and as she went on winding and winding and winding, and the skein became thinner and thinner and thinner, my glances became more and more frequent and our hands came closer and closer together. There was now but one coil left. I let it slip first through both hands, then through one, then checked it, then held on to it; then looked once more into those dear eyes of hers, which this time looked straight into mine and allowed me, as I imagined, to see right through them into the depths of her soul below. Our hands met; an emotion thrilled through my whole frame; and, taking her hand in mine, I asked if I might keep it: and she — Well, she didn't say "No."

"So that is ball number three, I suppose?" said Ferrers. "Well, old boy, I wish you good luck."

"And now," continued Talboys: "I want you to do something for me. I want you to be 'best man' at the wedding."

"Delighted," cried Ferrers. "Though it is always rather sad to me, do you know, to see an old friend married. Not that I have any doubts as to his future happiness, but only because one is certain to lose one's friend, not as a 'friend,' you know, but as a 'familiar.' By the way, you have not yet told me the name of this charmer."

"Amy Ancharad; a sister of Sir Ralph Ancharad."

"What!" exclaimed Ferrers, in an agitated tone, and with a pained and astonished look upon his face. "You don't mean to say —" And then, stopping abruptly, he added after a moment: "I am afraid, Talboys, I must recall my promise; I cannot see you married to that girl."

"What *do* you mean?" enquired Talboys, astonished in his turn.

"Nothing, except that I should not have minded so much if it had not been my greatest friend," replied Ferrers, somewhat inconsequently, and with a tone of regret in his voice.

"My dear Ferrers, why should you mind at all? What do you know of Miss Ancharad?" enquired Talboys, with just a suspicion of annoyance in his manner.

"Nothing against her, so you need not look so ferocious, Hugh. Only this; that a little more than three years ago: it must have been just before she came up to town on the occasion you just now told me of: I asked her to be my wife and she refused me. In the gentlest manner possible, it is true, and with apparent pain and regret; but she had never looked upon me except as a friend, and gave me to understand this so clearly and so decidedly, that I felt that the best thing I could do would be to try and forget my love for her. That was why I went abroad. It has taken three years, you see," he added, with a forced attempt at gaiety; "but still I can't be expected to dance at her wedding, you know. And now, old fellow, good-night. And once more, good luck to you. Believe me, you have my best wishes for your happiness."

But Ferrers went away with an aching heart. In spite of his faint endeavours to conceal his feelings, he had not succeeded in forgetting his old love. Indeed, he had found this so impossible that he had returned to England bent on seeking her out, and—if she were still free—of pressing his suit again. Till this moment he had cherished a strong hope, and now to be asked to assist at her marriage to his oldest and dearest and most intimate friend! It was too much.

The next week saw the name of the Honourable Courtenay Ferrers added to the list of passengers by a steamer which was

To sail away, on the following day,
For the land of the Great Mogul.



MORS IN VITA.

THE spring-tide glory flows in gracious streams
Of golden sunshine and soft silv'ry rain;
All nature freed from winter's icy chain,
Smiles 'neath the west wind's kiss, the radiant beams,
Till new life wakes around! and yet it seems
The joy of spring but adds more bitter pain
To weary, aching hearts, which sigh in vain
For the lost love they clasp but in the world of dreams:
Above whose grassy grave the soft breeze sighs,
The flow'rets bloom, the sweet bird-carols ring:
Yet, all unheeding, cold and quiet lies
The love with whom all earthly joy took wing.
Patience, sad heart! beyond the azure skies
Thy darling lives, in Heaven's Eternal Spring!

E. M. A.

LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

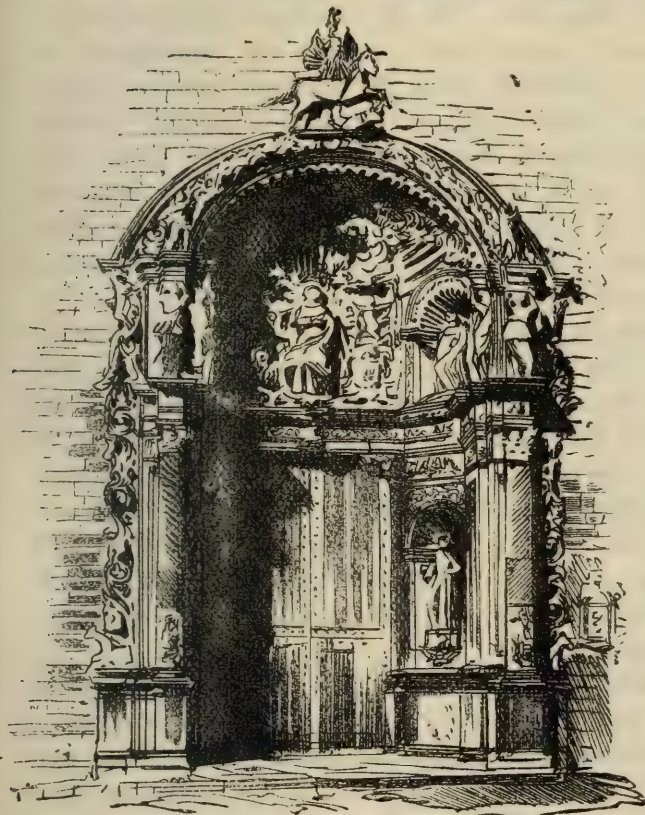
BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.

Miramar, Nov., 1886.

MY DEAR E.—If H. C. is able to compose reams of rhymes about the stars, and picturesque penitents, and Olympian deities, I think I could no less write you reams of prose about this Palma de Mallorca.

The very air inspires you. Indeed, each time that I have closed my letter, it always seems to me that I have left out the very thing, and the very best thing, of all I had to say.

Just as when, after parting from a friend, perhaps for years, we remember a thousand-and-one thoughts we



DOORWAY OF SAN FRANCISCO, PALMA.

have left unuttered, yet which can never be written.

Or as when death overtakes one we have loved, and eye and hand and smile have for ever become unresponsive to ours, we would give all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, half our own existence, to have them again for a moment with us, to clasp them close and fast, and tell them, as we never told them in life, how many of our thoughts and hopes and heartbeats were theirs.

Then comes the assurance that those who entered into our innermost life, must also have known all we would have said, but for that strange *something* within us which keeps the lips closed when the heart is fullest. I often think of those lines of Dora Greenwell's—almost her very best—and their consolation :

"Oft o'er my soul will a sudden yearning
Bring back the days we are leaving behind,
Bring me thy footstep, no longer returning,
Bring me thy greeting, so gay and so kind.

How shall I bless thee? No longer beside thee,
I can but love thee, and lose thee and pray;
Yet will God love thee, and keep thee, and guide thee—
Thou knowest all that my heart would say!"

It is ever thus. "What we best conceive, we fail to speak." The more we think and feel and would say, the deeper the silence. This is wise and well, I suppose. To go through the world with our heart upon our sleeve would never do; yet we sometimes err in our reticence. Many a kindly word not spoken, many a kindly glance not given, would come back to us with fourfold interest when the opportunity has passed away for ever and for ever. We all of us live too much as if our present life were immortal, and what we do not to-day, or to-morrow, or next year, may be done in some far distant future. But I have learned that the future of lost opportunities has no existence.

I say that I could write to you everlastingly about this Palma de Mallorca. It seems to possess inexhaustible themes. Blue skies that enchant you; blue waters that for ever lap and surge upon the shore; floods of brilliant sunshine, steeping one half the street in dazzling light, the other in deep, advancing shade; a grand cathedral which awes by reason of its expanse; quaint thoroughfares where you dream the dreams of the lotos-eater; an atmosphere rarified and intoxicating. Lastly those watching hills which surround this cluster of white houses, this Palma de Mallorca, undisturbed in their eternal repose.

But you would grow weary of this constant theme. Human nature is fickle; to one thing constant never. Just as I am in despair at H. C.'s poetical phrenzies, whereby you see even the sublime may pall. *Toujours perdrix* is a mistake, as much in feasts of reason as in flow of wine.

It is fortunate, then, that the scene changes.

We have left Palma de Mallorca, but not for ever. In this small island, Palma is our headquarters and rallying point. If H. C. went astray in a fit of poetical absence of mind, he would immediately be returned to Palma, labelled and under the charge of the guard. There our good landlord—who occasionally watches him out of the corner of his eyes as I have seen people at the Zoo watch an animal marked DANGEROUS—would lodge him and nourish him until the return of his beloved keeper.

I am now writing to you from Miramar: but for a moment I must take you back to Palma.

It was Saturday morning. The sun was shining with its accustomed brilliancy. I wish to impress this fact upon you, because presently it did nothing of the sort.

There is one open carriage in Palma; only one as far as I can ascertain. This unique treasure—which, like the Koh-i-nor, has no rival—belongs to our good landlord. We demanded and secured

it. The treasure was ours: not for ever, fortunately, but for the occasion.

We had some trouble in securing it, by reason of the confusion of tongues which here is our normal state of being. Perseverance surmounts——but I have quoted this wisdom to you before, and will not weaken it by repetition. Yet as History repeats itself, why not Proverbs?

Francisco—our conversational Refuge for the Destitute—interpreted at our carriage conference. Lord Beaconsfield, you know, had an interpreter at the Berlin Conference, so that we were not establishing a precedent. I talked; H. C. was silent witness in case of legal difficulty; Francisco translated; our host understood, promised, acquiesced, bowed, was altogether charming. The conference broke up in perfect union and accord. Everything went merry as a marriage bell.

There would have been a great many marriage bells, by the way, before now, had I not over and over again restrained H. C.'s fine phrenzied poetical admiration of—I am bound to confess it—most charming and picturesque penitents. Their devotions give a softness to the eye and an appealing expression to the face of these Mallorquinas, that only a stoic, such as you know me to be, could resist.

But to our carriage.

It was a barouche. Its fashion was not of this century; and as we made progress, I kept slipping down, and having to draw myself up again before finally landing in humility at the bottom. H. C. was as cool as a cucumber throughout, and as rigid as Cleopatra's Needle on the Thames Embankment, with the sphinxes facing the wrong way. I afterwards found that he had made a footstool of my beautiful tripod—fancy the degradation!—which kept him comfortably perpendicular. He always takes excellent care of himself, and rushes in triumphantly where I should fear to tread. You know the quotation, and if you apply it to us verbatim I will not let him know. But be careful to discriminate. Do not for a moment think of *him* as the angel.

We had a great many packages. Some were bags, some were portmanteaux, some were simply done up in brown paper. These were lowering to one's dignity; but I am not of those who have a genius for packing; I can only put things together; and we could leave nothing of all this behind. H. C. was simply useless, and if I could have put him also into a bag, it would have been a great help, and a relief.

We had our photographic appurtenances—a host in themselves. And we had to take with us a three days' supply of provisions. This commissariat detail requires explanation.

Miramar is not a town or a village, but simply an estate belonging to the Archduke. It is a part of the island, and if not its very grandest portion, I doubt very much if we shall see anything more beautiful.

There would be no accommodation here for visitors, but for the goodness of the Archduke. His Royal Highness has built a house, or Hospiteria, where anyone who wishes to do so may go and put up for a time. It is furnished in the simplest manner. There are many bedrooms, and one large sitting or dining-room, which reminds one more of the refectory of a monastery than of anything else. There are servants to do your bidding; and everything is just as you might find it in a country inn, except that on leaving you have nothing to pay for all this accommodation. In other words, in coming here, you are accepting the silent hospitality of the Archduke, who has built the place solely for the use of strangers. The domestics who wait upon you are even forbidden to accept any gratuity you might wish to offer them for their trouble and excellent goodwill.

Only two conditions are attached to the use of the Hospiteria. One, that, in the season, when it is likely to be crowded, visitors are not expected to stay more than three days. The other, that every visitor must bring with him his own provisions.

Both these rules are wise and necessary. In this out-of-the-way spot, it would be impossible to cater for arrivals which one day might number five, and the next ten, and the third not one. It is unnecessary to speak of the cost such a proceeding would entail, or of the delicacy one would feel in availing oneself of what would be too much goodness. It is already a singular and graceful act of consideration that this Hospiteria should have been built at all, and that it is kept up and provided with every reasonable necessity, for any number of people, most of whom never see the Archduke, and can only thank him for this unseen and impersonal hospitality by using and not abusing it.

But this is anticipating. We are still in Palma.

We sat in our room, surrounded by our Lares and Penates, wondering where and how everything would be stowed away in the barouche. H. C. looked like an image of poetry on Mount Parnassus, wrapt in sublime visions. I like to put things delicately, but probably if he had been writing this about me he would simply have said I looked ridiculous. In one hand he held his drawing portfolio; in the other he clutched a ream of foolscap paper.

The windows were opened to the hot air and bright sunshine. Imagine that in November. Imagine, and envy. The jeunesse dorée of the club opposite, lounged luxuriously also from open windows, watching us and wondering as to our destination. Or perhaps too lazy to wonder, they only watched.

Francisco was all excitement. We were, of course, calm. It is the prerogative and privilege of great minds to be calm. Francisco had seen to the packing of our hamper in conjunction with our good landlady. But though working conjointly, they had packed separately, by which means forty-eight eggs were stowed away instead of twenty-four: a fortunate circumstance for us, as it turned out in the end.

Antonio, our chamberlain, had for the moment ceased his wild and wonderful vocal display and hovered restlessly about, ready to assist in the transport of luggage down the three flights of stairs. For I think I have told you that we are, happily, on the third floor, in this Fonda de Mallorca.

Tout vient à qui sait attendre—*even in Mallorca.*

Presently we heard a sound as of furious driving, and an aristocratic rumble that could come from nothing less dignified than a barouche. It stopped at the fonda.

I looked out. H. C. came down from Mount Parnassus, and looked out too. The horses were not much to admire, but we found they were very good ones to travel. This is not a very original remark, but then there is nothing new under the sun. It is also the truth. The coachman on the other hand, was passable as to appearance, but the most stupid man in creation. At least I hope so; for if he was not stupid, he was wicked, and may be said to have committed murder in his heart. In spite of the forty-eight eggs, it was no fault of his that we were not starved to death.

I should like you to have seen the packing and stowing that went on. How cunningly a niche was found for everything; in the carriage or on it, behind it or below it. How cleverly, for instance, things were stowed away in the hood, and eventually fell about our heads and nearly gave us concussion of the brain. How refractory packages were fastened with cord, a safe but undignified process. How my precious dressing-bag was deliberately strapped to the seat beside the coachman, *upside down*. This unfortunate bag is more trouble to me than the Eastern slippers were to their owner. Like an ugly duckling, it is selected not only for its own blows and bruises but for those of others. I have a presentiment that it will never see England again. Even the slippers, you know, were at last disposed of, though I forget in what manner.

Then final directions were given to the coachman.

In passing through Valdemosa, he was to call at the public purveyor's and order sundry articles of food to be sent on to Miramar. With the exception of eggs, we had with us a very limited amount of sustenance. I gravely pointed out to Francisco the necessity for beating this order into the unimpressible brain of the driver, Paolo. This was so well done, that Paolo at last waxed impatient. Everything was ready, and he whipped up his horses. Away we went.

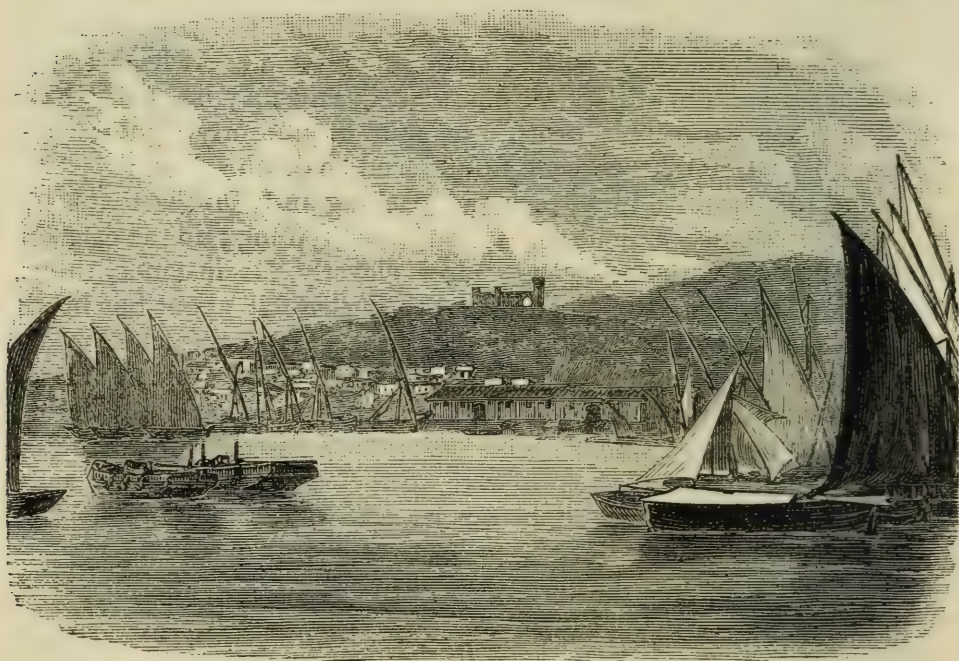
A scream arrested us: a lady's scream. It is only ladies who *can* scream. Men shout. Perhaps it makes more noise, but it is not half so penetrating. There was a sound of command in this scream, and Paolo knew better than not to turn back.

Our thoughtful landlady was flourishing like a flag from the window—not herself, but H. C.'s macintosh and windy-weather cap, which he had left behind him. He rather prides himself on this kind of thing: calls it the abstraction of the poet's mood. The lady

must have been inspired, as events proved. She dropped them gracefully on to the head of Francisco, who stood just outside the doorway. Emerging flushed and breathless from this avalanche, his head bristling like a porcupine, but good tempered as ever, he handed the forgotten articles to H. C. who bowed his thanks to the hostess, and, in absence of mind and full sunshine, immediately proceeded to put them on.

Now you may wear two coats, but though the ghost in the Bishop of Winchester's song wore three old hats, it is certainly conspicuous, in travelling, to wear even two.

I quietly took one off and put it away, and he was none the wiser. After all, absence of mind has its advantages. You can do very



PALMA ; LOOKING TOWARDS BELVER.

much as you will with these afflicted ones. Like an old friend of ours—you ask him at table what he will take, and he quietly says : “Thank you—nothing :” and half-a-dozen courses are placed before him one after another ; and everything disappears ; and in the end he doesn't know what he has had, or whether he has had anything at all. He has charmed you all the time with his conversation, and I suppose he has entertained and absorbed his own mind and attention also.

We started off again, this time for good. Down the street we clattered, round by the port, and up a wide thoroughfare—a sort of Palma boulevard, less picturesque and interesting than some of the narrower streets. Then we gained the railway station and passed out into the open country.

It was our first introduction to anything beyond the confines of the

town. The scenery to begin with was flat. A long straight road, a wide plain, distant hills or mountains. All this preparation and packing and ceremony was for a drive that, altogether, would not last much above three hours. You see we were not going to the ends of the earth—wherever they may be situated in Mallorca.

I cannot rave to you about luxuriance of vegetation, because we had not very much of it. It is winter here, though not the winter of our discontent, I am glad to say. In England we should be happy with such a winter as this all the year round. Our English summers are little more than a snare and a delusion, and we have no sooner lost our six weeks' spring east winds than we seem to plunge at once into the equinoxial gales of autumn.

There was, then, not very much luxuriance of vegetation to be seen to-day. But here and there a date tree reared its head, spreading its plumes, and allowing its fruit to hang in rich clusters. And occasionally a palm tree gladdened our eyes, giving such distinctive character to the landscape, and standing out so picturesquely against the background of the blue sky, for which it seems specially to have been made.

How unlike England it all is. How it transports one at once to everything Eastern ; everything Italian or Spanish. With what strange glow and rapture it somehow fills the soul. What emotions it raises within us, that, try as we will, can never be put into words.

" This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air :
But if I did it—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud—my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul."

What is this longing, this soul-voice, which makes itself heard and felt, but to which we can give neither name nor expression ? What is this vital spark ? Whence cometh it and whither does it go ? And why is life made by it so weighty a burden, so awful a reality, so exquisite a joy that we scarce can live it out ? Who wonders at Shelley proposing to overturn his boat, and so put an end to the mystery of the unknown, which weighed so terribly upon him also ? Who wonders, yet does not shudder ? For who would rashly raise the Veil with his own hand, and rush into the Presence Chamber unbidden and unblessed ?

We found the trees all bare ; the olives picked and the figs garnered. Those lovely, luscious figs : green outside if you will, but red and soft and juicy within. Here and there the landscape was enlivened by white farm-houses, some of them by the roadside. Yellow strings of Indian corn decorated them ; and long strings of the red capsicum give a picturesque and rich colouring to their surroundings. On first seeing them in the distance we were puzzled to know what these rich red ropes could be.

Beside us ran a narrow stream, now almost dried up, and thirsting for the winter rains. Dry walls bounded the road ; walls of rough grey stone rudely piled together, yet answering every necessary purpose. There were few people about. Hardly anyone passed us ; but those who did so, saluted us with marked respect. This, of course, was due to the barouche. There has been no familiarity here to be followed by the usual contempt. All the country people in Mallorca greet you in passing, and it is a pleasant custom. It seems to give you a foothold in the island ; seems to say : " You are welcome ; we are glad to see you ; come as often as you please, and stay as long as you like." It is a passport to their good graces ; a free-masonry sign of goodwill. In short it is what Sterne would call " a quiet attention."

But to-day we met very few wanderers. The country looked almost abandoned, and the houses deserted.

At one point where the roads crossed, was a long, low, white house with a portico supported by square pillars. Strings of maize and capsicums hung about the walls. In a corner of the portico sat an old woman, spinning. Behind the house was one of those palm trees, alas, so rarely seen now in Mallorca. Their scarcity, however, makes them only the more precious. How true it is that what we possess in abundance we seldom appreciate. If we had a sackful of diamonds they would cease to charm.

But this place was all so picturesque that H. C. thought he should like to sketch it ; and in his sketch he has introduced one or two of these palm trees, but I tell him they are not at all like the real thing. They are palm trees in the last stage of consumption. We managed to make Paolo understand that we wanted to stop. He cannot speak one word of anything but his own language, and ordinary signs, intelligible to ordinary people are as Greek and Hebrew to him. He is excessively dense. I sometimes wonder if there is any method in his madness, but I think not. It is sheer stupidity.

Even as H. C. was sketching, and I was trying to render myself agreeable to the old spinning Jenny—if her name happened to be Jenny—a change came o'er the current of our life. In less poetical but plainer words, the change was in the current of the air. We were getting into the hills, towards Valdemosa : not only one of the most romantic spots in Mallorca, but one of the most romantic in the world.

Clouds gathered about the hills and overspread the sky with inconceivable rapidity. All our sunshine disappeared and was replaced by a semi-darkness. A cold blast of wind swept over the mountains and down the gorges, searching out our very marrow. Lightning and thunder rolled and crashed and echoed about the hills : echo repeating echo, until each succeeding clap came to drown the fainter voice.

Then the rain descended in torrents and streams ; with such force

that the very horses staggered and swerved, and seemed powerless to resist its rush. The very carriage rocked and swayed and appeared about to overturn.

And now, indeed, had set in the winter of our discontent: I might even say despair. The hood had been hastily put up, the apron unrolled.

H. C. now showered blessings upon the head of our Palma hostess. So did I. It would have been so hard and uncomfortable to find oneself defying the rain with impunity, while H. C. was finding the only suit he had brought away from the hotel, soaked through and through. I suppose but for that, he would have had to waste his Sunday in bed, whilst his clothes were being dried, shrunken and shrivelled at a slow charcoal fire. What an object he would have presented! A species of grown up *Oliver Twist* at Dotheboys' Hall. For I also had only brought this one suit with me; and with the most generous intentions you cannot share a suit of clothes as you would an apple or an orange, or even a substantial legacy. Not that I was ever left a legacy to divide, except a piano, once upon a time, which reached me with every atom of its inside taken out. I remember hammering away at the keyboard for about five minutes, wondering what was the matter; whether I had suddenly gone stone deaf like Beethoven; and like Beethoven, was drawing tears from others' eyes by sweet sounds I could not hear myself. But in looking round, I saw no evidence of fine feelings aroused: only very open countenances, and blank expressions of amazement.

Then it occurred to me to look inside. And behold, some one had taken away all voice from the instrument, yet given it speech: for just at the top, written in pencil, were these words: " 'Twere vain to tell thee all I feel!" They had also, in this case, saved me the trouble of division; had taken the oyster and left me the shell.

The storm raged. I have never in all my life seen anything to equal its fury. We hoisted our umbrellas, but they did more harm than good. The wind blew a perfect tornado; rain came down in waterspouts. As we struggled up into the hills of Valdemosa and the narrowing gorge, the hurricane increased in fury, the rain swept down the road like a river. We saw that we must be passing through great beauty and grandeur of scenery; could just discern that the romance of Valdemosa had not been exaggerated; but every pleasurable sense was swallowed up in vanity and vexation of spirit.

And yet the very storm itself was a source of interest and gratification. It was unspeakably grand, though horribly uncomfortable, and almost overwhelming: blinding us with its force, taking away our very breath. I tell you again that I have never seen anything like it.

We swept round into the narrow street of Valdemosa. Every moment I expected that Paolo would stop and order fresh supplies for our commissariat department. But we were at his mercy; had

neither breath to remind him, nor words to be understood. H. C. trembled with agitation, as every moment our hope of Paolo's memory and goodwill grew less. You see H. C. knew nothing about the forty-eight eggs any more than I did. And, after all, it is impossible to eat eggs without an accompaniment of dry bread, at the very least. Butter, as I have told you, is an unknown quantity in Mallorca—if anything can be said to be a quantity that has not yet been called into existence.

The very last house was passed, our hope died out, we went on, and the storm continued with unabated fury. How Paolo on his perch withstood it, is a mystery for ever. Mallorcan coachmen evidently possess some hereditary virtues unknown to fame. One hardly wondered at his forgetting anything.

We had still a forlorn hope left : perhaps on his return journey that night he would remember us. That is to say, if there ever should be a return journey. The chances at present seemed that we should be blown into the depths of the sea, or overturned by the raging of the wind, or drowned in the descending waterfloods ; our nerves shattered and extinguished by the roar and roll of the thunder, or reduced to ashes by the vivid lightning.

It played about the hills, and lighted up the dark heavens and seemed literally to cross our path. Flash after flash, fork after fork ; the grandest most sublime spectacle you can possibly imagine, filling one with untold emotion, one's nerves roused and responding with a thousand vibrations. All the mighty artillery of Heaven seemed to be battling and crashing and falling about our ears, gathered together and overshadowing this wild and mountainous, this grand and romantic spot of earth.

The hissing, roaring rain, falling with a force we had never seen equalled, or anything like equalled ; the fierce blasts of icy wind ; these appeared more earthly elements, and were poured out with furious and unsparing hand.

But we rather trembled for our experiences at Miramar. Was all this the commencement of the rainy season ? If so we should be simply shut up for three days in the gloomy depths of the Hospiteria. Our occupation like Othello's would be gone. True, H. C. might draw atmospheric pictures : "Miramar in a Storm," "Continuation of Miramar in a Storm : " giving a picture to every hour of the day by way of variation. And I might indulge you with reams of prose to match H. C.'s reams of rhymes. But all this would hardly save us from a melancholy madness. H. C. made a feeble attempt to sing "Wait till the clouds roll by : " but at the very first line the wind caught his open mouth, and rushed with hurricane force down his throat, and I thought he would have expired in the struggle to get his breath back again.

We left Valdemosa behind us, and went round by the coast. There was nothing to be seen, but I can tell you now that the sea was

very near us on the left. We were very much above its level, and it was bounded by magnificent cliffs. Hills rose above our right hand.

Before very long we came to a solitary house, and had reached our destination. The carriage stopped with a sudden jerk, and Paolo made some remark, brilliant but unintelligible.

It was now almost dark. We unpacked ourselves as well as we could, and left Paolo to unpack such of our possessions as had survived the hurricane. Our poor hamper ! Its contents by this time must have been turned into a kind of Mallorcan hotch-potch. Starvation stared us in the face. H. C. refused to be comforted.

I must tell you that we did not at this period thoroughly under-



MALLORCAN FARM HOUSE, WITH CONSUMPTIVE PALM TREES.

stand the system of the Hospiteria ; did not quite realise that all this was the result of kindness and forethought, and we were not entering an inn, but accepting hospitality. That, but for this Hospiteria, we could not have stayed at Miramar at all, since it contained no other roof to shelter us, beyond the residence and dependencies of the Archduke, which are, of course, sacred from intrusion.

Not quite comprehending all this, we were inclined to more criticism than we should otherwise have indulged in. But we were never dissatisfied ; and our remarks bordered on the humorous rather than the severe.

Perhaps not at the very first moment. We entered at once upon a bare room, paved with flags, containing nothing but whitewashed walls, a bench, a long deal table, and a chair or two. A small charcoal fire glowed and smouldered in the middle of the room in a

large earthenware pan. The sight was pleasant, for the atmosphere was cold and creepy.

It was almost dark and the whole place looked so cheerless and gloomy, that I have seldom in my life felt so depressed as during the first half hour of our stay at Miramar. The people who received us of course spoke not one word of our language, nor we of theirs. They seemed to look upon us with anger, and to resent our coming. I am persuaded now that they did nothing of the kind. Their manner was probably only astonishment at our arriving in the midst of such weather. And astonished they might well be.

But the effect was the same. They stood and stared at us: two women and an old man. They never moved, but might have been monuments rooted to the earth. Not pillars of salt, unfortunately, or we might have deprived them of a hand or a foot when we fell short of that commodity. Paolo unpacked and brought in the things. When he came to the hamper, he handed it to the old woman, and she now moved for the first time, and took it into deeper depths of darkness beyond this room. We trembled and followed; followed into a long refectory with bare walls and floor, and two long tables, a few chairs and benches. She lighted a lamp, which threw a pale, lurid glare around, making the darkness visible; casting ghostly shadows upon the whitewashed walls. Then she unpacked the hamper and found everything safe and unspoiled. H. C. at once danced a sailor's hornpipe, which I thought a very undignified and unpoetical exhibition. The old woman opened her mouth at the forty-eight eggs, and gasped; and by a rapid mental calculation, we could see that she put us down for at least a week's visit.

When we returned to the outer room, everything had been brought in. Paolo had stabled his horses, housed his carriage, and was comfortably seated over the braize fire: trying his best to bring back his circulation. It must have been hard work.

He got up when we entered and touched his cap, evidently knowing his duty to those who travelled in barouches. Then he intimated by signs that he would help to carry up the luggage. After all, then, he was well-disposed? But we made him understand that he had done his part, and must now rest and make the most of his embers. A further bestowal of half-a-dozen cigarettes of finest Turkish tobacco, apparently made him our slave for ever.

Then the old woman showed us upstairs. We had the whole place to ourselves, and a choice of rooms. Some contained two beds, some three. We felt melancholy and depressed, determined to share the same room and live or die together, and chose the largest and most comfortable that contained two beds. Everything was of the very plainest description, but we were quite content.

If only this rain would cease, this cold, creepy atmosphere. But the storm beat down with as much fury as ever, and there seemed no chance of abatement. The shutters were closed, lamps lighted, and

as far as was possible we made believe to be very cheerful and jolly. We put out our familiar objects: a book or two; a small aneroid, which stood hard and fast at Hurricane; drawing books and pencils; our photographic affairs; and began to feel more at home. H. C. carefully unpacked and mounted the tea-making apparatus, having taken good heed to bring a large supply of bohea and spirits of wine. In truth, it proved a consolation.

H. C. suggested dinner. It was long past six o'clock, and a happy thought. For a poet I assure you that he has great capacities; excellent powers of digestion. Anyone seeing us together would never for a moment imagine that *his* was the laurel-crowned brow. This only proves that people should never jump to conclusions.

Whilst we were upstairs, the people down below had been carrying on a conversation. You never heard such voices. I never have; anywhere. They raved and shouted and ranted and roared at each other. I thought they were fighting, and that we should find them all lying flat and dead upon the floor. Not at all; they were on the most affectionate terms, and this was their way of showing it. I expected to hear plates and dishes flying, a smashing of crockery, a clashing of knives. I quite expected that we, too, should be murdered. It was all a delusion. We were as safe as if guarded by a regiment of soldiers. Their hearts were brimming over with good fellowship towards each other, and towards us. We did not know it then, but we found it out afterwards.

Down we went. The old woman was very far from stupid. She understood our intelligent signs and set our table. This was not a ceremonious, or difficult, or tedious process. Then she displayed our limited stores, and consulted our pleasure. This also was an easy matter. There was no *embarras de richesses*. The foundation of every meal had to be the same—eggs, eggs, and nothing but eggs. After leaving Miramar, I don't think we shall look at an egg again for a century.

The old woman went off to her kitchen, and we followed; partly out of curiosity, partly for want of something to do. It was the warmest, best, and most civilised room in the house: furnished with excellent stoves and an array of pots and pans that might have gladdened the heart of a Francatelli.

We were evidently treading upon somewhat sacred ground, and having propitiated the old lady by a large amount of pantomimic admiration, went back to our refectory to await results.

I assure you they were not to be despised. Her cooking was excellent. We ate, drank, were comforted, and took heart. Life now bore a different aspect. It is melancholy, when you come to think of it, that human nature is so dependent upon outer influences.

Paolo came to bid us good-bye. He was to return for us on Monday afternoon. We impressed upon him by all the emphatic signs in our power that he must call at Valdemosa on his way back,

and order our supplies. He pretended to understand, shook his head wisely, declared all sorts of things, and in the end did nothing. In short he behaved very badly. But for the goodness of the Archduke we should have famished; should not even have had bread to eat.

Paolo departed in the wind and the rain. They were fierce as ever, but lightning and thunder had ceased. We went back to our room and got to our books. Presently H. C. proposed tea, but instead of the apparatus, I suggested that the old woman should boil her kettle.

I went down, and came upon a very singular scene.

The number of the household had been augmented. The younger woman's husband had come in, and also a neighbour or two for a chat. A little girl of ten or twelve years was also there. They were, most of them, seated on low chairs or stools round the charcoal pan, smoking and talking. The young woman is very civilised, and hospitably inclined. She placed a chair for me, and evidently wished me to join the family circle. I felt much honoured, and did so at once. The situation was so unusual that it bore the greatest possible interest. It was certainly a very domestic and unceremonious scene, as you will hear.

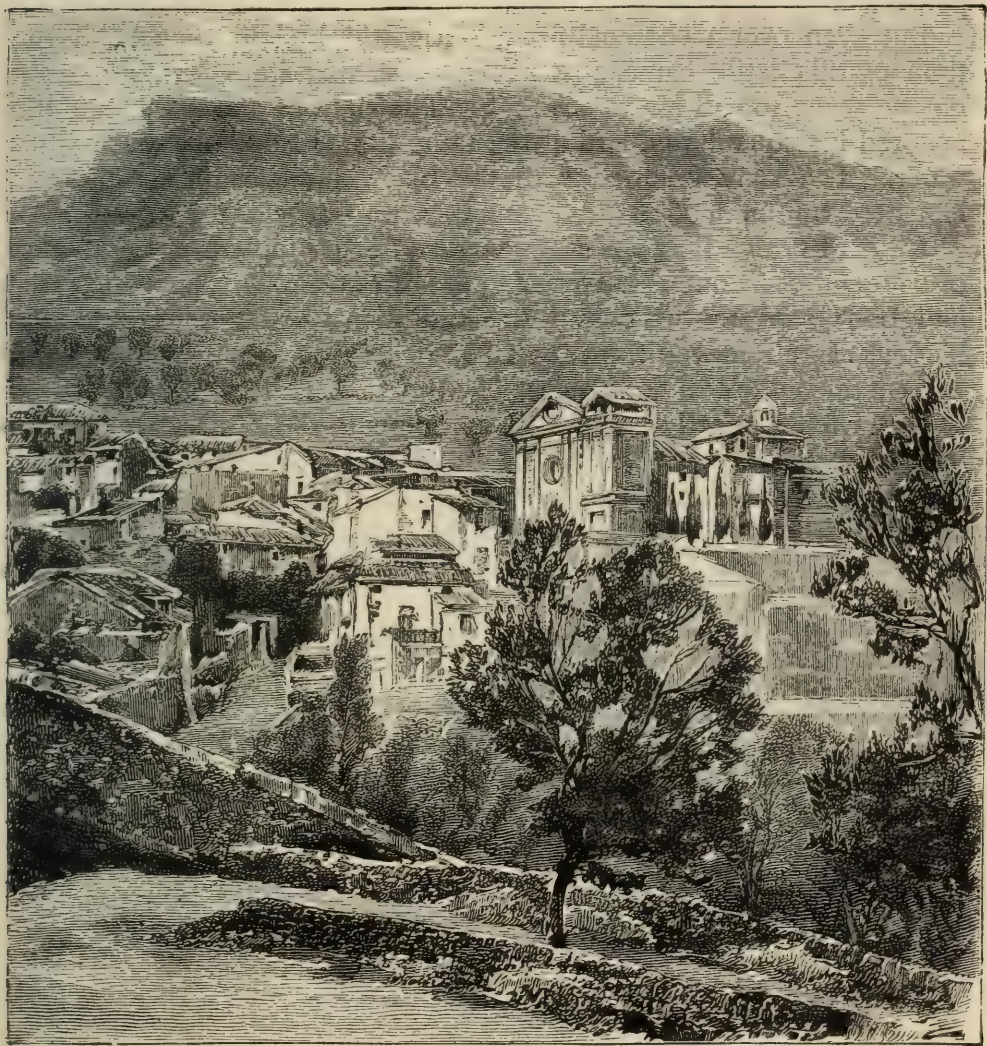
The young woman is the old woman's daughter, and is very comely. Perhaps the old woman has also been comely in her day, but that is long past. The child is the old woman's grand-daughter, so that three generations are here represented. The girl has a brother, and a very nice young fellow into the bargain, who is a young servant of the Archduke—but this is anticipating.

One or two lamps shed a partial light over the room, but this obscurity rather added to the scene. As we sat round the fire, we might have made the fortune of any painter. The young woman, compared with the others, is singularly intelligent. I easily made her understand that we wanted a kettle of boiling water, and she quickly brought it. We all held it by turns, whilst she, with a palm leaf, fanned the embers into a glow. She chattered all the time, and sometimes I understood, and sometimes I did not. It was the same on her side. Then she would laugh heartily at our blunders: our splashings and floundering in the deep waters of signs and symbols. Not a loud laugh; but a rich, rippling, good-natured laugh, which came from the heart and indicated a broad, kindly nature.

All this time the grandmother sat apart, without the charmed circle. She was busy in the domestic duty of brushing the child's hair, of which she was evidently very proud and particular. It was immensely long and fine. She brushed and combed and combed and brushed, and the child sat it out for at least half an hour with the most exemplary patience. Then it was beautifully plaited in a plait that reached to her knees, and was tied up with ribbon. The result might have created envy in many a higher state of life.

Another domestic performance was going on at the table. You must forgive me for introducing these intimate details to your notice, but I feel bound to place the scene before you exactly as I saw it that night : and seeing, shall never forget.

At the table, then, the old man was shaving; evidently he shaved only once a week, and this was his hour of trial. He is a very ugly old man, but like his spouse, probably has had his day. I am taking it



VALDEMOSA.

for granted that he is her husband, but on further consideration there is a distinct resemblance between them. It may be that they are brother and sister, and that the old woman, like Mrs. Gummidge, is a lone lorn creeter. The more I think of it the more I am inclined to this view of the matter. I must try and find this out before we leave, though it is not of vital importance one way or the other.

The old man's face was lighted to ghastly hideousness by a lamp placed close to him. A broken bit of looking-glass was lodged

uprightly against a jug, and in this he regarded himself with complacent admiration. I cannot say that he inspired me with any similar feeling, and I gradually managed to get my back towards him.

Altogether, we were a merry party; and, as the Vicar of Wakefield says, what we wanted in wit we made up in noise. Not that we were uproarious by any means. And as far as I am concerned, when noise begins, it deprives me of what little wit I might otherwise have possessed.

But even over a charcoal fire a kettle will boil in time; and the time of this kettle came, just as H. C. waxing impatient, appeared on the scene to call me to account. The sight of the boiling kettle restored his equanimity, and at the same time landed me out of hot water. I meekly followed with the black and steaming cauldron; lamented by the good-natured assembly, who begged me to return.

I did so presently, when we wanted a fresh supply of water, which of course took another half hour to get up steam. The young girl had been sent to bed; and the old man's toilet completed, the hideous glare removed from his face, he looked quite harmless and presentable.

I now felt perfectly happy and at home in the Hospiteria. The little company were evidently full of goodwill and good intentions. They neither intended to murder each other nor to make mincemeat of us. The domestic drama was all so novel, so unusual, so different from anything ever before experienced, that it charmed in its way, and charmed very much.

All this time the winds blew and the rain descended with undiminished vigour. It was our only drawback to perfect contentment. If it continued, what on earth should we do? The very thought of a whole day in doors filled us with dismay. H. C. no longer attempted to sing, "Wait till the clouds roll by," but changed his tune to some melancholy ditty which developed in me distinctly suicidal tendencies.

In our room, we could not get rid of the cold and creepy feeling that would not be banished. So we made a virtue of necessity and retired early.

I had not been very long in my snug bed in the corner before I felt convinced that the sheets were damp.

I dare say it was only the general dampness that seemed upon everything, but it came to the same thing. It is just as bad to fancy your sheets damp, as to know they are so. We are all creatures of fancy: like that old and departed personage, who, whenever he went out visiting and forgot his nightcap, would borrow a piece of thread to tie round his head and over his ears. By this means fancy kept him from taking cold; but if by chance he forgot the thread as well as the nightcap, a severe influenza was the result.

I could not be happy in my damp sheets and it was not a case for a needleful of thread. A whole reelful would have been useless.

I confided my fears to H. C. He declared that his sheets were perfectly dry, and good-naturedly offered to give me one of them. Half a loaf, he said, was better than no bread. In this instance I thought not. I would discard sheets and sleep in blankets.

However H. C. insisted, and began to roll round and round in his one sheet, to leave the other free. He was afraid that I might take both, and was anxious to make sure of one. You see, we can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us ; we judge others by ourselves—and he had once devoured my breakfast as well as his own. So he went on rolling and rolling until at last he could roll no longer. He was at an end of his resources, and was rather out of breath. There was nothing more to wind, and yet he was no further advanced than at the beginning.

Then he discovered that the beds had only one large sheet apiece, which, folded over, served the purposes of two.

He was now bound hand and foot ; was swathed round and round just like a mummy. He couldn't move, declared he felt suffocated, implored me to come to his assistance. He rolled round and round the other way, but the stupid thing wouldn't unwind. He made himself frightfully uncomfortable, but could obtain no release.

I nearly died from laughing. If I had wished to help him ever so, I couldn't have done it. I was as bound as he was, but from laughter, whilst he was much nearer crying.

But I knew better than to release him. For the first time in his life he was properly clothed—in a strait-waistcoat. I devoutly hoped it would cure him of his poetic phrenzies, and left him to it. It was kind cruelty, inspired by the best motives. My intentions were honourable. I discarded my own sheet as soon as the hysterical fit had subsided, and slept very comfortably in blankets.

Every now and then the rain woke me up, beating against the windows. One window in the next room was without a shutter. On our first arriving the old man had gone up to close it. A battle ensued between him and the wind, and the wind conquered. A furious blast wrenched it from its iron socket, and it fell to earth with a great crash. The house luckily was solidly built, or that might have gone too. It was such a night that really it seemed as if the spirits of evil were abroad.

In the dead of the night or the small hours of the morning, the rain ceased, and then followed that drip, drip, from the eaves, which is so depressing. As depressing as the constant thud, thud of snow that fell from the roof of my cell one Good Friday Eve at the Alpine Monastery of the Grande Chartreuse. I never closed my eyes all night, I remember, but shivered in my ice-house.

I did not shiver here, but frequently woke. That drip, drip made me melancholy. I asked H. C. if he was awake, just for the sake of company. For answer I received nothing but a hollow groan. Next morning he told me he had had horrible dreams all night.

Dreamed of Moses and Aaron and the Pharaohs. Dreamed that he was an Egyptian himself, was dead and being embalmed. The last experience he said was horrible, and made him feel very much in the condition of the piano that was left to me as a legacy. Certainly he looked very miserable and cadaverous, and I had to support him down stairs to breakfast; after which he revived. But as yet no sign of poetic phrenzy. Is he cured? Or is it merely a case of *Reculer pour mieux sauter*? I have doubts and fears.

But before this, in the first flush of sunrise, I got up and threw wide the shutters. What a scene met my gaze. If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget it.

These shutters make the room pitch dark. They exclude every



HOSPITERIA.

ray of light, so that when you wake, it might be midday or it might be midnight. On this occasion I struck H. C.'s repeater which he had placed between us on a chair, and found that if the sun were not behind time he must be just rising. I threw the shutters open, and released the room from the blackness of night to—what?

All the glory of a summer morning, winter though it was in these regions. What a change had come over the face of nature. The air was bright, crisp and balmy. Not a cloud to be seen in the sky, which was of that intensely clear, early-morning blue that is so refreshing and exhilarating. At our feet, below the Hospiteria, the coast stretched far away. We looked into great depths. The slopes were rich and cultivated. Gardens of flowers, terraces and fields of olives and oranges and grape-vines. In the midst of all this incon-

ceivable beauty reposed the Archduke's residence and dependencies: the former a very charming place, though small.

The outline of the coast was eccentric and broken ; now rocky and rugged, now rising gently in luxuriant and wooded slopes ; tongues or points of land stretched out into the sea, one behind another ; all diversified in form and of surpassing beauty. The sea lapped the coast, calm and blue as a proverbial Mediterranean. The sun, shooting upwards, could not be seen, but cast a golden, flashing pathway across the waters ; lighting up the whole world I gazed upon with its ineffable glow and glory.

I thought it the serenest, most beautiful, most perfect picture I had ever seen. Probably a portion of the effect and impression were due to the suddenness of the sight. Probably, too, the late fearful storm had given an additional clearness even to this ever clear atmosphere : gilding, as it were, the rainbow. There was also the charm of the unexpected—greatest of all charms. But at all times this undoubtedly is one of the loveliest views in the world. No wonder that the Archduke loves it, and, though not belonging to Mallorca or to Spain, has made himself a resting-place for such weeks or months of the year as it may please him to dwell here. It is an ideal existence.

It was too much. I roused H. C. out of disturbed slumbers ; persuaded him that he was neither an Egyptian, nor a mummy, nor embalmed ; that it was all a bad dream. I bade him look at the sunshine and the blue sky ; made him get up and go to the open window, and gaze upon Paradise. Once there, I thought that I should never get him away again. It made us both feel as if we were on holy ground. The scene was too fair for earth.

The whole day has been a paradise to us, but I cannot enter upon it here and now. I spare you a longer letter. You have been much in my thoughts to-day. All this beauty, and all other beauty, ever reminds me of her who has sanctified our home and made it also a paradise of beauty unto us, holy and consecrated. This is the very place from which to waft you a benediction. It comes to you on the wings of affection and the sunbeams of the morning.



OUR SPARE-ROOM.

FOR some time after we had been married we lived at Finchley. Finchley is not a particularly interesting place in itself. It is not town; neither by the utmost stretch of imagination could it be called country. It is exceedingly difficult to get to the city—where I go every day—from there: or to get anywhere else, for the matter of that. But I think our chief reason for going to live there was that we had the chance of taking a house that had been built by a friend of mine for his own occupation, who found, after it was finished that he would have to live abroad for two or three years. Houses that people build for themselves are always so much nicer than those they build for other people. So we at once decided to take it, and ever since have been trying to get away from it.

We both wanted to live in town; in London proper. I wanted my club handy, and Margaret wanted the bonnet-shops. Choosing a new house is a weighty and important matter, and we braced our minds beforehand by many conversations on the subject, and at last began seriously to house-hunt.

We looked at a good many “desirable residences” in the regions of South Kensington and Bayswater, and saw a few that we liked pretty well, and a large number that we did not like at all. A good many of the houses had just been newly and smartly done up for the season—it was the month of February when we began our search—with an evident view of attracting the public. But although they were magnificent with paint, paper, whitewash and Jacobean mantelpieces, we frequently found that they were deficient in the less apparent details of drainage, cisterns and boilers, with which unimportant trifles the landlord had evidently considered it not worth while to busy himself.

Some houses, on the other hand, were not “done up” in any way, but were dark, dirty and cobwebby, and haunted by cadaverous caretakers. It was useless to try and investigate any of this species, as Margaret refused to go any farther than the drawing-room floor, and would not entertain the idea of them for a single instant. “First impressions are everything,” she would remark emphatically when I tried to convince her that painting and papering were not yet lost arts, and that the care-taker would not, of necessity, form part of our establishment.

Our house-hunting was therefore a long business, and we made quite a picnic of it, Margaret declared, for we frequently retired to a confectioner’s for afternoon-tea, instead of going back to Finchley for that meal, which was always a great point with Margaret. She would not have thought the day complete without it. So as the

afternoons at the end of February are long and light we frequently walked about looking at houses till nearly six o'clock.

One evening as we were sitting together in my smoking-room after dinner, talking, as we usually did, about our prospective new house, Margaret seemed suddenly to be struck with an idea.

"Charley," she said, leaning forward in her chair and placing her pretty little forefinger on her pointed chin as she spoke: "there is one thing that our new house must *not* have, and that thing is a spare-room."

"No spare-room!" I cried, nearly dropping the end of my cigar in my surprise. "Why, where shall we keep all our boxes, my dear; and your sewing-machine, which you never use; and ——"

"I mean spare bed-room," interrupted Margaret, reprovingly. "And I wish you wouldn't say 'my dear,' it makes me feel so old."

"Old!" I said, astonished and mystified.

"Yes," returned Margaret. "Mr. Whitelock calls his wife 'My dear,' and they are both over seventy!"

This argument was unanswerable. I did not attempt to refute it.

"Well then," I continued, "My—my love" ("Ah! that's better," said my wife), "would you mind explaining to me your objections to that time-honoured institution, a guest-chamber? Are you afraid of a ghost taking up its quarters with us?"

"No," answered Margaret, still keeping her finger on her chin and regarding me with a fixed and steadfast gaze. She had not even blenched when I alluded to the sewing-machine. "But, in London, he who keeps a spare-room keeps an hotel."

It was too true. I dropped the end of my cigar into the grate outright, while visions of Aunt Georgina from Leamington, "just running up from Saturday till Monday," with her maid, her asthmatic pug and her array of imperials, coursed through my brain.

Aunt Georgina—she was Margaret's aunt, not mine—had frequently performed this athletic feat since our marriage, and we had soon found out that her "Saturday till Monday" was not by any means the same as that period of time recorded in the almanacks. It was sometimes a week, but more often ten days, and it had been known to extend itself to a month. I do not think we either of us absolutely disliked Aunt Georgina. In fact, if anyone had asked us *what* we particularly objected to in her, we should have been somewhat puzzled to reply: but she was like a rich plum-pudding—a little of her went a long way.

They say that everything comes to those who wait. Still more does everything come to those who search long and diligently enough, and in due time our house was found. It was in every way satisfactory. It had been freshly done up with paint, paper, and the newest things in mantelpieces and dados, and a proper attention had been paid to such things as drainage, gas-pipes, and boilers. It was in the Bayswater direction; it was close to an omnibus route; it was only a shilling cab-fare distance to my club; and there was a very tolerable

bonnet-shop not far off. In fact, Margaret said, that by putting her head out of the bath-room window, and craning her neck only a very little, she could just catch a glimpse of it.

But in this world of ours, unfortunately, there is no rose without a thorn; no supreme good without some drawback. Our house had a spare-room.

To be sure, as Margaret observed when we talked this over after quite settling upon the house, we might have known that we *must* have a spare-room, as there were only our two selves, the servants, and a very limited assortment of boxes and trunks to stow away. "And you know you wouldn't like to live in a *very* small house, Charley," she added, "even if we could have found one in this part of London."

I assented to this.

"Anyway," continued my wife, "I shall not furnish the room as a bed-room."

"Well, that was the original idea," I replied.

At last we were settled in our new house. I will not attempt to describe our removal and subsequent establishing of ourselves and our furniture. It was not pleasant to go through the experience, and it is not pleasant to recall it. I think Margaret and I came as near having a quarrel as we ever did in our lives—at that time. It all floats through my mind, as I think of it. A confused dream of bedsteads and sideboards in the drawing-room, wardrobes in the dining-room, Dresden china and mirrors in the kitchen, Maple's men and strange cats everywhere, tinned-beef dinners and a general all-pervading atmosphere of straw.

But at last it was all over, and Margaret triumphantly declared that the house looked as if we had lived in it for years. I thought it rather a dubious compliment, but I did not tell her so.

One morning as we were sitting at breakfast, a letter was brought in and handed to my wife. "The postman is late this morning," she said, as she took it. I said nothing; I had caught a glimpse of the handwriting, and a huge golden monogram on the envelope. It was from Aunt Georgina.

I laid down my knife and fork and looked blankly across the table at Margaret, who looked blanker still. She had just spread a piece of toast with marmalade—although she was in the middle of eating an egg—in sheer desperation and self-abandonment.

"I can't read it," she said, presently, tossing the letter across to me. "It looks as if she had written it with her left hand and her eyes shut."

I deciphered its contents with some difficulty, and then read it aloud to Margaret. It ran as follows:—

"MY DEAR MAGGIE," ("I wish she wouldn't call you Maggie," I said)—"So I hear you are established in a new town house. I think

of running up next Saturday till Monday, just for change of air for myself and Boulotte" (Boulotte was her pug), "and to have a peep at the fashions. May I occupy your spare-room? Of course you have a spare-room. I know the delightful plan of all London houses. All news when we meet.

"Your affectionate

"AUNT GEORGINA."

To-day was Monday; she had not given us a long notice of her coming.

"To think of her trying to make us believe that she is really only coming from Saturday to Monday," said Margaret, scornfully. "I don't quite see how she could 'peep at the fashions' between Saturday afternoon and Monday morning, unless she means she is going to study the bonnets in church."

"Well," I said, dividing my morning paper into two, and giving Margaret the part with the births, deaths and marriages, which she always likes to see: "it's awkward her wishing to come to us just as we have decided not to have a spare-room, but we can easily write and say we haven't one."

"No," said Margaret, shaking her head sagely, "that would never do. In the first place, she would be very much offended; and she mustn't be offended; for you know, Charles, I have some expectations from her—though it is not much." That was very true. "Then," she continued, "our not having her to stay in this house will not prevent her coming up to town. She will come all the same, and stay at an hotel. She will walk in upon us directly she arrives—Saturday afternoon, very probably. She will, of course, expect to be shown all over the house; and it will strike her as rather peculiar why we have left our large front bed-room on the third floor empty. You know the horrid way she always notices everything. She will bear down upon me with an avalanche of questions, and probably get everything out of me before I know where I am. No! What we must do is to turn that room into some other kind of room—not a bed-room," she concluded somewhat vaguely.

It was time for me to go to the city, so we did not discuss the matter any more just then.

As I have said, this was Monday, and by Wednesday evening we had not come to any decision about our spare-room. But Margaret had written a polite, though, I am afraid, rather hypocritical note, to Aunt Georgina, saying that unfortunately we possessed no spare bed-room, and entreating her to take up her quarters at the Paddington Hotel, and give us as much of her society as was possible.

On Wednesday evening we began seriously to discuss our spare-room; time was getting short. Margaret could suggest nothing but a picture-gallery or a private chapel; but as we had no pictures worth speaking of, and there was a church in the next street, the suggestion

could hardly be called a good one ; and my idea of turning the room into a kitchen—as the sanitary-dwelling folk tell one that the kitchen should always be at the top of the house—was received by Margaret with scorn and contumely.

“Fancy one’s dinner coming *down* to one, instead of up,” she said ; “how dreadful it would be. I’m sure I should never be able to eat a morsel.”

“I don’t quite see the objection,” I replied mildly, “unless you think it would be a ‘come-down ;’ and, in any case, your dinner must go down when you eat it, you know.”

Margaret took no notice of this remark. It is always a point of honour with her not to see any of my jokes when they are at her expense. She did not even smile.

“It would be horrible,” she went on. “I should feel that the next thing would be, I should have to wear divided skirts and stockings with toes to them.”

“I thought stockings always had toes,” I said ; but Margaret vouchsafed me no reply, not condescending to inform me that she referred to Dr. Jaeger’s new system, where the toes of the stockings are separated like the fingers in a glove.

The next day, as I was sitting in my office, a brilliant idea suddenly rushed post-haste into my mind. It was so brilliant, and also I felt that the time was getting on so fast, that I decided to go home at once and communicate it to Margaret. I was rather proud of it, for as a rule I do not have so many brilliant ideas as she has. Therefore I at once left the office, although it was only half-past three ; and hailing the first respectable-looking hansom that I could see, drove rapidly home.

I dashed up stairs into the drawing-room, where Margaret was sitting.

“Oh, Charley !” she cried ; “how you startled me. I was altering a dress, and I thought you were a caller.” And she pulled out her paraphernalia from under the sofa, where she had hastily huddled it.

“Margaret,” I cried, “I have an idea !”

“What ?” she said, and looked as astonished as if I had said I had got a megalosaurus in my pocket.

“I have an idea about the spare-room,” I gasped ; for I was very much out of breath with my rapid ascent of the stairs. “We will—make it—into—a billiard-room.” And I sank into an arm-chair. “Get on your hat, and we will go out and order a billiard-table at once.”

“A billiard-room ! Of course ! the very thing !” ejaculated my wife. “Why didn’t we, either of us, think of such a simple thing before ?” I was not quite so sure about the simplicity of it—as regarded the cost, at any rate.

When Margaret had got her hat and I had recovered my breath,

we sallied forth, my wife perpetually wondering all the way into Oxford Street why we had not thought of such a simple thing before. "Besides," she said, "only think of the cheapness of furnishing a billiard-room. Why, you absolutely want nothing except the table and a few seats."

"A carpet, though, would rather improve the appearance of the room, would it not?" I ventured to put in.

"Well, yes; but a carpet is not furniture."

I was silent, but I did not feel so thoroughly convinced of the cheapness of the arrangement. The cost was certainly the least brilliant part of my idea, I could not help thinking.

Before we went home to tea that afternoon, we had ordered a square of Turkey carpet, a capital second-hand full-sized billiard-table, and a few leather-covered seats to put round the room. The carpet was to be made a fixture, the next day; there was no difficulty about that part of the business; but the table and seats could not be sent till Saturday morning.

It was running things very close! Suppose Aunt Georgina and the billiard-table were to make their entry into the house at the same time? We were not a stone's throw from the Great Western Hotel, and she was sure to come round directly she arrived—she was one of those people who *must* air their tongues.

But no! On second thoughts, such a horrible rencontre would be unlikely. Saturday is only a half-day and the men would be sure to want to get their work over early. It was also extremely improbable that Aunt Georgina would arrive before the afternoon. Still, in spite of all this, we both felt a little nervous, and we talked a good deal about it during dinner, and afterwards when we retired to my little snugery of a smoking-room, opposite the dining-room.

About nine o'clock we heard the postman's knock, and Margaret flew to get the letters. She brought back a post-card from Aunt Georgina, and we nearly tore it in two with both trying to read it at the same time—though there was not much to read. "I shall arrive to-morrow morning at the G. W. Hotel, and shall look in upon you some time in the afternoon," was all the information it gave us.

I drew a long breath of relief.

"By Jove! What a blessing!" I said. "By the time she arrives here, our spare-room will be a full-fledged, business-like looking billiard-room, and she will suspect nothing."

I am sure we both slept better that night than we had all that week.

Directly breakfast was over the next morning, we began to expect our men. I had taken a whole holiday—or I should say a half-one, as I always come home early on Saturdays—in the honour of the billiard-table and Aunt Georgina. When ten o'clock struck, Margaret affirmed it as her opinion that the men were not coming at all. I tried to disabuse her of this idea. But when eleven and twelve had

struck and still there were no signs of them, I began to be alarmed myself, and Margaret walked up and down between the back and front drawing-rooms like a bear in a cage or a tragedy actress rehearsing her scene.

I had just gone to my study for a newspaper, when, half way down the stairs, I heard a shriek from Margaret. I hurried back at once. She was standing by the window. "Come! Come!" was all that she could say.

"What is it?" I cried, rushing to the window. "The billiard-table?"

Alas! it was no such vision of bliss. A four-wheeled cab had just drawn up at our door, from the window of which was seen protruding the crumpled black face of a pug, and a huge nosegay of flowers.

"Perhaps it is some one come to the wrong house," I said, faintly, catching at a straw. But the next moment this straw was swept away from me, as a stout, fair lady in a towering floral bonnet, stepped gingerly out of the vehicle, pug in one hand and flowers in the other. It was no optical delusion. It was Aunt Georgina.

In another minute she would be in the drawing-room. What were we to do? Margaret, however, did not lose her presence of mind even in this unlooked for and awful crisis. In all the five years of our married life I have never known it desert her.

"Now, Charley," she said, emphatically, "what we have to do is to occupy her and keep her in this room, till the billiard-table arrives." She looked pale, but dauntless, and I felt my courage rising by force of example.

"Supposing the table doesn't come at all?" I could not help suggesting, dismally.

"It's sure to come," she said, catching her breath: "and try not to look as if anything was the matter."

"Well, and here I am, you see!" cried a high-pitched voice. And Aunt Georgina sailed into the room, pug-dog, flowers, and all, diffusing an overpowering odour of patchouli around her. "I thought you wouldn't mind my dropping in to lunch." (What a lucky thing this isn't the Palace of Truth, I thought to myself.) "I really couldn't wait any longer to see my dear Maggie." (Here she rapturously kissed my wife.) "Besides," she added, candidly, "they had nothing I could eat at the hotel; so I left Hawkins there with my luggage and came on to you straight. I've brought you some flowers out of my garden. Of course I know London florists are perfection, but, after all, there's nothing like the real article."

One might have supposed from Aunt Georgina's speech that London florists were in the habit of supplying their customers with artificial blooms. We both murmured our thanks, and our delight at her premature appearance, while I stooped down and patted the pug's broad back, by way of conciliating its mistress.

"Ah, isn't she a dear creature," cried Aunt Georgina, seizing her

in her arms to kiss her. "You're a beauty, aren't you, my lovey-dovey?"

The lovey-dovey snorted and wheezed so apoplectically, in answer to this endearing squeeze, that it seemed as if it would never be able to get its breath again. So Aunt Georgina deposited her on a velvet covered arm-chair, while she went round the drawing-room, with Margaret's arm locked in hers, her gold double eye-glass up, exclaiming at and admiring by turns everything she saw, while I followed in their wake, trying not to look as nervous as I felt.

Suddenly, in one of the few and distant pauses in Aunt Georgina's conversation, or rather monologue, I again heard the sound of wheels stopping at our door; very heavy wheels this time. By ill luck she was just nearing the front windows, after having made the tour of the room. At once her gold eye-glass was up in its place.

"Why, I declare!" she exclaimed. "That huge thing looks as if it were stopping at your door. You don't mean to say you've been buying a grand piano, you extravagant children?"

It was the billiard-table!

I looked at my wife, feeling as if my heart, and, indeed, the whole of my inside were slowly, but surely, sinking down into my shoes. I wished the earth would open and swallow me up. But the earth, which is seldom as complaisant as one would desire under such circumstances, refused to budge.

Margaret was clasping her hands behind Aunt Georgina's brown silk back. In another moment I felt all would be lost; when all of a sudden, in the back drawing-room, arose an unearthly howling and screeching. Margaret's Persian cat had just strolled lazily into the room, in search of a particular arm-chair, which she loved, when she was roughly accosted almost on the threshold by Boulotte, who, though somewhat averse to attacking her own species, was not particularly afraid of a cat. But Mrs. Fluff, not appreciating the fun of the thing, boxed her ears soundly two or three times, and a regular scrimmage ensued.

Aunt Georgina flew to soothe her howling favourite, while the cat, who had jumped on to a neighbouring cabinet, to the imminent peril of Margaret's collection of gimcrack pottery, glowered with angry green eyes at her cowardly assailant, her tail the size and consistency of a sweep's chimney-brush.

It was none too soon! As I looked out of the window, the men were just hoisting the table out of the cart.

"You keep her here," Margaret whispered hurriedly to me. "I must go and look after them, and tell them not to tread heavily." And she vanished from the room.

It is not too much to say that at this moment I was fairly terrified. If I failed, I was responsible to Margaret. I felt a violent desire to seize Aunt Georgina by the arm, and march her up and down the room, as they do a person who has swallowed a narcotic poison. A

minute more, and the men's feet were distinctly audible tramping past the drawing-room door. If my wife had told them not to tread heavily, they were certainly not obeying her injunctions.

"Dear me!" said Aunt Georgina, putting up her eye-glass as if it enabled her to hear better. "You don't mean to say that you have workmen in the house still?"

"I think it is some men coming to look at the pipes," I replied. Pipes seem usually the things that workmen come to a house to look at, so I felt it was a safe thing to say, though not strictly true.

But Aunt Georgina seemed bent on investigating things for herself. In fact, her hand was already on the door, while a thrill of horror shot through me, when, fortunately, the door itself arrested her attention. Margaret, who is an adept at painting—on anything but paper (that is to say, she paints on wood, china, terracotta and plush; but paper she says she never can manage)—had spent some weeks in decorating the drawing-room doors, and the result was eminently charming.

"It's very well done indeed—very well done," she said, peering through her glasses at my wife's artistic productions. "Those fox-gloves seem growing up quite naturally out of the ground. By the way, where is Maggie gone to?" she exclaimed, the next moment, sinking down on to a sofa which stood near.

"I—I think she has gone to look after the luncheon," I stammered. "You see we are young housekeepers even yet." And I smiled a deathly smile. I caught a reflection of myself in the mirror opposite, and it seemed to me that I had absolutely *aged* since I had got up that morning. "My hair will be white soon," I thought, "if this sort of thing goes on much longer."

"Dear me!" said Aunt Georgina, suddenly starting up from her seat, and dropping the eye-glasses through which she had been steadfastly regarding me for some time. "While Maggie is busy, why should you not show me all over the house? It will be a capital opportunity, and the stairs will give me an appetite for luncheon."

I groaned inwardly. I had been dreading that she would make this request all along.

"I—I'm afraid there's nothing to see," I stammered lamely.

"Nothing to see!" echoed Aunt Georgina. "I conclude, if there is nothing worth seeing *in* the rooms, there are the rooms themselves? Are you afraid of its taking too long? I should think if, as you say, you do not possess a single spare-room to offer a visitor, that is not likely."

This was said rather stingingly, and I felt that it required a decided answer of some kind. Another crisis had come. I screwed up my courage to the sticking point: though, like Macbeth, I felt that I was nothing without my wife.

"To tell you the truth, Aunt," I began, in desperation, "I am afraid Margaret would not at all like my showing you over the house

without her. Indeed, I am sure she would be awfully disappointed. She has been talking about your coming all the week," I went on, warming with my theme ; "and looking forward to taking you all over the house, and showing you the new furniture herself, and would be awfully cut up, I'm sure, if I were to play Cicerone without her."

I felt my own man again after thus asserting myself, and Aunt Georgina at once looked mollified. It was a happy thought of mine.

I had still another *mauvais quart d'heure* before Margaret made her appearance, during which I industriously plied my charge with photograph albums and books of prints. As for the billiard-table men, I thought they must have taken their departure up the chimney, for I heard no more of them on the stairs.

Words fail me to express how delighted I was when the dear girl came back to relieve guard. I don't think she had ever made me so happy since the day she said she would be my wife. The luncheon bell rang very soon after, and as we were going down stairs she managed to whisper to me, while Aunt Georgina was attending to her pug, that the table was all right, but the seats had not come.

"So I took the large arm-chair out of your dressing-room, and one or two others to put against the walls, and the room looks all right and finished off. They've fixed the rack up, too, and it looks lovely. I made the men take off their shoes before they went down again. I told them there was someone ill in the house."

"Margaret !" I said, reprovingly.

"It's all right," she replied ; "the cook's got the toothache. There's no deception."

Our ordeal was over and we were safe. We had a most delightful luncheon. Aunt Georgina, who always enjoys her food, thoroughly appreciated it, and I opened a bottle of my best champagne in her honour. She was in high good humour and when afterwards we escorted her in triumph over our house, she did not turn up her nose at a single thing: not even at Margaret's many-coloured Early-English bed-room candlesticks, which I own I can never hold without a shudder.

Her one disparaging remark was made, when just as she was leaving the house, she turned round to my wife, who was standing in the hall, and said :

"Your house is absolutely perfection ; the only drawback to it is, that you have no spare-room."



ON SPRING.

WE are now in the days of Spring : fairest and most exquisite season of the year. The winter snows have melted, the skies are blue, blackbirds sing among the young green leaves, and the scent of the hawthorn fills the air.

Year after year this season comes to be our delight. From all time its charms have been sung by the poets. Perhaps no theme has inspired sweeter lyrics. Countless are the madrigals which celebrate the praises of Spring, and it almost seems as though its delicious influence compelled every pen to paint its delights in "words that burn."

Yet though it may be easy to sum up the magic effects wrought by this Spirit on Nature, how faint an idea can mere words give of Spring's wonders ? We smile at George Herbert's clumsy simile :

" Sweet Spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie."

Yet can even lovely and masterful language enable one to realise the spirit abroad at this season ? It is a spell so mysteriously delicious, so vaguely beautiful, that words are powerless to describe it. And although in the sultry hours of Summer and in waning Autumn, we longingly look back and fancy ourselves recalling those fresh Spring days ; yet when the period comes round again, it always brings this strangely new sensation, never felt at any other time, and which, despite their richer beauty, is missing in the later seasons.

What is this mystery ? Who can declare it ? Is it the effect of the springing grass and budding trees ? of so much dawning life in Nature ? We cannot tell. Perhaps it is what Wordsworth was thinking of, when he wrote the line :

" The subtle smell that Spring unbinds."

Early Spring is often considered the most enjoyable time of the year ; and it is not hard to find a reason for this. Coming after the bleak Winter days, Nature herself hails its approach with delight. Gloom and sadness are banished, the spirits of joy and promise fill the air. And how delicious to think of the long months of sunshine before us !

Thus all combines to make a day in early Spring a precious thing. Ripples of alternating sunlight and shadow chase each other across the broad landscape, sweeping from where the brown ploughed hill in the distance arches against a faint blue sky—on over fields and hedgerows to the budding woods, where a hundred birds trill forth their happiness.

And as the days go on, this abundance of beauty ever increases. Soon the woods deck themselves in pale green robes; cuckoos answer each other with quaint, familiar note, and flowers spangle the grass.

It seems in keeping with the spirit of the season that its first flowers are nearly all white and fragrant.

Spring is the youth of the year, and youth is the time for light-heartedness. The very fact of existence in the midst of so much loveliness would be joy enough. But we have more. We learn that our senses' enjoyment of nature—the mere seeing of her beauty and hearing of her melody—is a narrow and material joy. This is the lowest form of our delight in Spring, and one which even inferior animals share in common with us. We have more, far more. There is in us something higher and diviner which adds to the mere pleasure of the senses a wider joy. For lovely Nature wakes responsive chords within us, and ours is the rare gift of drawing lovely thoughts from a lovely scene.

For this reason Spring-time is more to men than a fairyland of sight and sound. The blue of the skies and the scent of the flowers have for us a deeper meaning, and awaken a host of thoughts.

It may be that we see in the germinating life around a type of youth, and wonder if this yearly renewing of Nature's youth can be a sign that our own youth, which we can enjoy only once in this world, will be ours again in the next.

And sometimes, even whilst revelling in the most exquisite Spring weather and scenery, a sense of incompleteness comes over us with almost an aching force. Something is wanting, we know not what; and we find that we can weary after a time of the sweetest sounds and the most glowing colours.

How is it? Shall we sorrow over this, deeming it a lack of appreciation arising from our earthliness? No. Rather is it a sign of our immortality. Earthly joy will never lastingly satisfy the cravings of the soul. It is the same with all beauty, fame and splendour of this world. They please for a time, but ever again comes the inmost cry: "Unsatisfied! unsatisfied!"

It is God, who, in His infinite wisdom has made it so. He has implanted in us wide and boundless capacities for joy; capacities so boundless that what is best of this world's pleasures will never entirely satisfy us. And thus we are led to feel that there is a future life, higher and more complete, and to set our hopes on the time when we shall know in its fulness "the Peace which passeth all understanding."

And so in the bright Spring sunshine, when waters are sparkling and green boughs are waving, the very "impulse from a vernal wood," may serve to lead our thoughts and hopes to the Life beyond.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER VII.

MORE NEW FRIENDS.

THIS new life in London was a very delightful life to Beatrice Ward. But she was a girl who had her serious moments of self-examination.

Impulsive and passionate as she undeniably was, Beatrice had too much strength to let her heart be drifted away on the first great wave of feeling. Until she had met Godwin Earle, she had never seen any man with whom it was possible to fall in love. Village swains had not been insensible to her girlish attractions; a curate had cherished serious thoughts of her, and had bitterly lamented her "scanty tocher." But Beatrice had gone her way untouched, dreaming of that impossible hero who is always the phantom king of an unclaimed heart. The phantom changed his shape very often; but he was never in the least like any real person of her acquaintance.

And now, after all, it was a most unheroic hero who had won her first love. A man who was too weak to fight against adverse fortune, and had made up his mind to rush out of the world! True; but the very man to interest an impetuous, warm-hearted woman, and inspire her with an intense longing to help and comfort him to the end.

It is a true saying that pity is akin to love, although the love that is born of pity is scarcely the right kind of love for a woman to feel for her husband. Yet it must be confessed that many a ladye cares more for the vanquished knight, whose wounds she has bound up, than for the victor who stands unhurt upon the field. Heaven keeps some of its best gifts for beaten men; and Godwin, sorely worsted in the conflict of life, was favoured in his day of humiliation with the great boon of a girl's first affection.

But, finding that she had begun to love him, Beatrice took herself well in hand, and resolved to check her feelings while they were still under her control. Because she had saved his life, was that any reason why he should give her his heart? Common-sense said no; and she forced herself to listen to common-sense, even while its harsh voice set her tears flowing. Yet surely the future was not without hope?

She was a pretty girl. Harriet knew it, and was always saying in her hearing that "beauty is vain." Kind Mr. Milton knew it, and displayed his simple pleasure in her good looks in his own honest

fashion. Yes, and Mr. Earle knew it. She was sure that he did; although he had been a little absent and sad, ever since he had talked with the fair haired woman at the theatre. But she had made up her mind not to think too much about Mr. Earle. And yet, alas! here he was, slipping unawares into her thoughts again!

"Harriet," she said, at the breakfast-table. "Harriet, I want to speak to you very seriously indeed. There is an important matter to be considered, and we must give it our attention at once."

Mr. Milton looked up from his plate with a startled air. But his wife understood her old pupil, and was not startled in the least. She knew exactly what was coming.

"Very well, my child," she replied calmly. "I am ready to listen."

"I want to earn some money," said Beatrice, abruptly. "I don't like to be perpetually eating the bread of idleness—that's one of your own phrases, Harriet! But don't think me ungrateful; it is very sweet to take kindness from you and Mr. Milton. Only it won't be right to let you go on feeding and clothing and sheltering me, as you have done lately. I must have an object in life: something to live and work for."

"Nonsense, my love," Mrs. Milton answered, soothingly. "As to food, it is quite naughty of you to mention it. The shelter is merely a top bed-room; and the clothing—well, really, you cannot call one or two trifles, clothing. I did buy you a bonnet, I admit; because I knew, from bitter experience, how terrible it was to wear a bonnet made at Silverdean."

"And that lovely black silk gown. Oh, Harriet!"

"My dear, I may surely make a little present sometimes. It is nice to see the effect of a tasteful gown on a pret—a hem—a young girl. I am too old to dress dolls for amusement, and I have no children. It would be too cruel to deprive me of an innocent gratification, Beatrice. I *do* trust you are not going to be unkind!"

"You dearest old Harriet, don't look as if you were going to cry! You have no tears ready, you know, and you are only puckering up your features on purpose to work on my feelings! Don't you know me well enough to understand me? Won't it be best for me to find something to do? I am quite burdened with superfluous energy, and I'm so healthy and strong that I'm sure nature never intended me to be an idler."

"Humph! one ought not, perhaps, to test the strength too severely. There was that fainting-fit in the fields."

"My dear Harriet, people can't be expected to remember *that*. Why, it happened at least a hundred years ago."

She spoke with hurried bravery; but her heart was throbbing fast. Oh, that Harriet would never refer to that fainting-fit in the fields again! A hundred times of late had she wished that she, herself, could forget that scene which had been enacted between the dawn

and the daytime. If she could forget—if she could take merely the slight interest of a new acquaintance in Godwin Earle, her heart would be free from this dull pain which was beginning to be a chronic malady.

"Do not exaggerate, Beatrice," said Mrs. Milton reprovingly. "I wish you would be content to remain idle, child," she added in a softer tone. "And I think Richard wishes it too."

"Indeed I do." Mr. Milton spoke in his quiet, earnest way. "Why won't you be our daughter, Beatrice? We should not have let our own child do any hard work."

"I am going to be your daughter to the end of my days," replied the girl in a decided voice. "But you must let me work if you want me to be happy. And you must help me, please, to find some children to teach. I will promise to tread faithfully in Harriet's footsteps, and then I am sure to be a wise teacher."

Mrs. Milton was silent and thoughtful. Her husband rose from the table, and stood looking down at her for a moment. Then he spoke, as gently and quietly as usual.

"There is Mrs. Wyville, Harriet," he said.

"Oh yes, there is Mrs. Wyville," she answered pettishly. "And if Beatrice is determined to teach somebody's children, the little Wyvilles will do as well as any others. But the plan vexes me very much."

"Nothing ought to vex us if it adds to her happiness," he returned softly. "She has a craving after work, and we must let her have her will." And with one of his kind smiles at Beatrice, he went his way.

The two women sat in silence for some seconds; then Beatrice got up suddenly, and kissed her old friend.

"Harriet, don't pretend to be sulky!" she said, impertinently patting the cheek she had just kissed. "And now make haste, and tell me all about the Wyvilles."

Thus coaxed, Mrs. Milton proceeded to tell the Wyville history in a few words. She had first known Mrs. Wyville as a handsome girl, who had gone out to America and married a New York millionaire. The millionaire was dead, and the widow had lately come to town with her two little daughters, and had taken a house in Bruton Street. Meeting Mrs. Milton in the street one day, Mrs. Wyville had cordially renewed their old acquaintance, and had talked to Harriet about the importance of getting a good governess for the children.

"They have been dreadfully spoiled, Beatrice," said Mrs. Milton in a warning voice. "Their mother is an easy, good-natured woman, and those two mites are allowed to lord it over her in a truly awful manner. I wonder the shades of our grandmothers don't appear to us, just to express their disgust at the way in which our children behave!"

"Never mind; they shan't lord it over me," declared Beatrice, laughing. "You'll take me to Mrs. Wyville's house this very after-

moon, and introduce me, and recommend me, and all that sort of thing ; won't you, Harriet ?”

And that very afternoon to Bruton Street they went.

It chanced that Mrs. Wyville was at home, and free from callers ; and they found her seated among her flowers in her pretty drawing-room. Beatrice was attracted at once by the widow's faded, yet charming face, and soft, caressing tone ; and Harriet's recommendation seemed hardly to be needed—so quickly did Mrs. Wyville make up her mind that Miss Ward would be a jewel of a governess.

“ My darlings and I are going to the sea-side for two months,” said this amiable mother, touching the bell. “ They must have a little fresh air and liberty, and then they will settle down seriously to the business of education. Nurse shall bring them in, and introduce them to Miss Ward at once.”

A smiling old woman, in a plain cap and neat black gown, answered the summons, and ushered in two lovely little human dolls, who looked as if they had just been taken out of the window of a first-class toy-shop. They wore exquisite frocks and fairy shoes, and had soft, fair hair, that rippled about their dainty heads in the most approved doll-fashion. As to Beatrice, she was almost speechless with delight, and felt that the world owed a debt of eternal gratitude to Mrs. Wyville for having brought such peerless beings into it.

The peerless beings, pirouetting over the carpet in the most charming way, kept just out of reach of their mother's extended hands, and surveyed the visitors with bright unabashed eyes.

“ Lilly,” said Mrs. Wyville, letting fall her white hands with a little gesture of exhaustion. “ One of these ladies is kind enough to promise to be your governess. I want you and Daisy to go and kiss her, and be ready to love her very much.”

“ Which one is it ?” asked the elder doll, who was just six. “ I hope it isn't the old one, mammy ; she does look *so* horrid.”

“ My dear !” cried the mother, in feeble protest.

“ Well, she *really* is horrid,” Miss Wyville continued, while Harriet's face looked as if it had suddenly turned to cast-iron, and Beatrice sat with glowing cheeks, wondering if she had better decline the charge of these interesting young persons at once. Daisy, aged four, advanced on her toes, and came to a pause at Miss Ward's knee.

“ I know,” she said, with a pretty little stare. “ It's you. You're not so ugly as that one.”

“ They will need a great deal of patience, I'm afraid,” said the widow, in an appealing tone. “ Daisy was born just after my poor husband died, and you may imagine ——”

“ Her poor husband was my papa,” interrupted Daisy, bent on simplifying things to suit the comprehension of the future governess. “ I never knowed him, but I can show you his picture.”

“ Darlings, here are some sweet biscuits,” cried Mrs. Wyville,

desperately holding out a plate of macaroons. The children fastened on them at once, and were happily silenced.

"With my great loss and my feeble health," said the widow, plaintively, "I have been crushed—utterly crushed. Dear Mrs. Milton, you will feel for me, and make allowances for these little ones. I am not fit to cope with their high spirits; and nurse, who is the most faithful of old servants, indulges them shamefully. If I were only strong enough to take them entirely into my own hands, I should be firm, *quite* firm. But we are the slaves of our servants."

"The best of them are often tyrants," said Harriet, smoothly.

"Ah, I knew you would understand! If I have been a little weak, my wretched health must be my excuse. But I am going to turn over a new leaf, and Miss Ward will find me ready to support her authority."

Beatrice felt, with sudden heart-sinking, that her authority would have a very feeble support indeed. But she was silent.

"We shall work together for the children's good," the widow continued, with an imploring glance.

Miss Ward saw that she was expected to say something, and made a formal little speech, in Harriet's best manner. But, in her heart of hearts, she was dissatisfied and disappointed. Like many young girls, Beatrice had had her visions of being a guide to those who were only a year or two younger than herself. She had secretly pictured herself as a ruling spirit, a wise teacher and friend; understanding all the perils that beset the path of maidenhood. By the light of her own experience she would lead others along dangerous ways, sustaining them with her help and sympathy. She was feeling very old and grave in these days, and thought that a thorough knowledge of the world had come to her early in life.

Already she could say, "I have lived; I have loved!" Her little romance was known only to her own heart; but she believed that it had given her a deep insight into other hearts. Later in life, when we know all that the world can teach us, we frankly acknowledge our inability to teach anybody else. One emotion has contradicted another; moods, opinions, affections, have followed each other in such rapid succession, that we "dare not think on what we are," and still less do we dare to guide others. Like the showman at a panorama, we can but point to the ever-shifting scenes, and touch the marked objects of interest here and there.

And yet, despite those dreams of hers, and despite the naughtiness of her future pupils, Beatrice was won by the bewitching faces and the graceful movements of the little limbs. She was conquered by the spell of their radiant childish beauty, and finally agreed to take them under her care.

"Awful children!" said Harriet, heaving a deep sigh of relief, when they found themselves out of doors. "What are you going to do with them, Beatrice?"

"Do with them? Improve them, I hope. If not, I must find some others."

"You won't find any decently-behaved children nowadays, my dear; they are an extinct race. All the nurseries are full of perky little men and women, who say just what they please, and insult unoffending people without let or hindrance!"

Beatrice laughed. And someone who was coming along Bond Street just then saw her, and thought her dimples perfectly charming.

"I have been to your house," said Godwin Earle to Mrs. Milton; and then he turned and walked by Miss Ward's side.

The girl did her best to suppress a certain glad heart-throb, and reminded herself that she had done with her dream. She had made the common blunder of mistaking the beginning for the end; her little romance had only just begun, and she believed that it was over for ever.

Do what she would, she could not help being happy because this man was walking by her side. And yet it was such a foolish, unreasonable kind of happiness that she was ashamed of it, and tried to hide it. But the tell-tale face of nineteen was so bright that all the world could see her joy.

"I am in a bad temper," said Harriet. "Beatrice has undertaken to teach two utterly unmanageable little girls. I only hope she will get tired of them in a week."

"But it's better to do unpleasant work than none at all," said Beatrice, true to her resolutions. "And why should I be spared all unpleasantness?"

"If you are determined to go in for anything disagreeable, wait till Saturday is over," pleaded Godwin. "Mr. Corder wants us all to dine at Richmond on Saturday evening. He says it will be a new experience for Miss Ward."

"She wants new experiences," said Harriet, as they all entered the house. "Beatrice, child, I hope you mean to enjoy yourself. I was afraid, this morning, that you were going to take life too seriously."

"Is there any cause for over-seriousness?" asked Godwin, thinking how fair the pure girlish face was looking at that moment. "I hope not. Don't let us deserve the old accusation of taking our pleasures in a sad fashion."

"The poor child hasn't had many pleasures, Mr. Earle," said Harriet, pityingly. "She led a very dull life in Silverdean; far too dull for a young girl."

"We are going to make the world bright for her now," he said, with a glance which expressed great readiness to do his part.

What memories women have! Beatrice could distinctly recall that glance when she laid her head upon the pillow at night. To her it seemed to convey a volume of unspoken promises for the future.

There is something pathetic in the romantic folly with which a girl

dwells upon a chance look or tone, and believes firmly in unuttered meanings. A few years of worldly experience generally teach her that anything which is meant must be very plainly uttered indeed, if one is to rely upon it. But it takes some time for a trustful nature to leave off "hoping all things, and believing all things;" and so it comes about that there are a good many unacknowledged heart-aches among the young.

On Thursday morning Beatrice awoke with the happy thought that there was only Friday to come before Saturday; and she ran down stairs singing; quite forgetting that Harriet had strictly charged her to go up and down quietly, on account of others.

But there was one to whom that clear voice came with a thrill of healthy young life, and unconsciously freshened his spirit as he sat over his solitary breakfast.

The song died away, and he felt as if all the sunshine and sweetness of the summer day had gone with it, leaving him as sad and weary as if he had no longer vigour enough to go on living his lonely existence to the end.

"I never make friends in these days," he thought. "Yet the Miltons are good people, and I have a great longing to know more of that young girl. She is like Sofie; yes, the voice reminds me of hers. It would be a happiness to bring her into this room, and talk to her, and teach her to sing."

A little later on, when Beatrice had gone out for an early walk, Mrs. Milton and Vordenberg met in the hall. And, much to Harriet's surprise, she found that her silent lodger was disposed to linger and chat.

"Your young friend is a sunbeam," he said, with his sweet, weary smile. "Is she only a visitor, or has she come to remain?"

He spoke perfect English, with a slight foreign accent which sounded musically in Harriet's ears. It pleased her to find that this reserved man, who had never seemed to notice any woman since he first came to the house, had yielded to the unconscious charm of her favourite.

"She has come to remain," she answered. "Her name is Beatrice Ward, a former pupil of mine. Only a few weeks ago her grandfather died, and I hardly know where she would have found a home if she had not come to us."

"She is an orphan, then?"

"Yes; she lost her mother when she was quite a baby; and her father, Captain Ward, died in India four years ago. If we could have our will, the child should live the easiest of lives. But she has caught the spirit of the age, and wants to be at work."

"May one ask what kind of work?"

"Oh, teaching, of course. Beatrice is not the sort of girl who will ever develop into a writer or an artist, although I think her a good deal above the average young lady. We object to the governess plan, but it is sure to be carried out."

"Has she found any pupils?"

"Unfortunately she has. Two spoiled little girls, whose mother is a widow, living in Bruton Street. I hope the children will make themselves as detestable as possible," added Mrs. Milton, laughing. "I want her to be sick of them."

There was a brief pause, and Harriet wondered more and more at Vordenberg's strange interest in her young charge. There he stood in the hall, looking down into her face with his steadfast dark eyes, and yet not seeing her at all. She said afterwards that he seemed to be looking through her, and into some far-off past in which she had no part.

"I wish he would make haste, and say what is in his mind," she thought. "He ought to remember that I have a hundred things to do, and yet here he keeps me standing in a draught! He wants to find out something more about Beatrice. Good heavens! It's scarcely possible that he has fallen in love with her on the stairs!"

"Your young friend has a very sweet voice," said Vordenberg, suddenly breaking the perplexing silence. "But she has not studied music, perhaps? Does she play?"

"Well, only fairly. Her taste has never been thoroughly developed," Harriet admitted. "I am not at all a good musician, myself, and there was only a wretched old piano in her grandfather's house. But, as you say, her voice is very sweet, and we must persuade her to take lessons——"

"I will give her lessons, with your permission," Vordenberg spoke eagerly. "All my life I have studied music, and why should I study it for myself alone? Mrs. Milton, your young friend shall be welcome to my instruction and my piano."

If he had said that her young friend should be welcome to his hand and heart, Harriet could hardly have been more astonished. This sudden breaking-down of the old barrier of reserve was so startling that it flurried and perplexed her. She scarcely knew whether to be glad of such extraordinary kindness or not. Like all old-fashioned people, she was afraid of changes, and never felt easy unless people jogged on at their usual pace without turning either to the right or to the left.

And yet, if you refused to forsake the beaten track, you might miss some good thing. Blessings wait for us at unexpected corners of the road; friends—as well as foes—invite us to step out into a wider path; it was no wisdom to be a deaf adder when the charmer was charming wisely.

"You are very good," she said, rather stiffly. "I will speak to Beatrice."

"Ah, you are surprised!" The dark eyes seemed to look her through and through, and she coloured under that searching gaze. "You are wondering why the snail has come out of his shell? My dear madam, even the snail may get tired of his solitary life some-

times, and put his head out of his dark house to feel the warmth of the sun."

"I am surprised," Harriet confessed, feeling that frankness was best. "But I am not ungrateful, Mr. Vordenberg; and I have often thought that your life must be very lonely. I don't think I overrate Beatrice; but I believe she is the brightest thing that ever came into a dull house and filled it with sunshine. And when I realise the gloom of her old home, I can't imagine how she has kept bright. After I left her, she had no companion save her poor old grandfather. I sometimes felt as if I had done a cruel thing in leaving the child, and marrying Mr. Milton," added the good soul, with tearful eyes.

"You did a kind thing, and a right thing—I am sure Mr. Milton thinks so," answered Vordenberg, with a smile that set Harriet's heart at rest. "You have all the good matronly gifts that a true Englishwoman ought to possess." (Harriet was in a silent ecstasy.) "And you will be an excellent mother to this young orphan—this fair girl who has come to be our sunbeam. When Miss Ward returns—this afternoon, perhaps—you will be so kind as to present me to her; and then I will make her acquainted with my piano."

He bowed in his courtly foreign fashion, opened the house-door and vanished, leaving Harriet standing in the middle of the hall, in a state of pleasant bewilderment.

He had actually gone so far as to pay her a compliment. Mrs. Milton admired Mr. Vordenberg more than any man she had ever seen in her life, and that flattering little speech of his had convinced her that she was not an unappreciated being. She went downstairs into the kitchen, and gave her orders with such a radiant face that the servants thought something wonderful must have happened.

Meanwhile Vordenberg was walking rapidly into Oxford Street with a strange turmoil in his breast. It was long, very long, since he had ventured to admit a stranger into that secluded life of his; and he was asking himself whether he had done a foolish thing or a wise one.

"I could not help it," he thought with a sigh. "Her voice reminded me of Sofie; and I feel as if Sofie herself had prompted me to do it."

CHAPTER VIII.

AT RICHMOND.

Two people were sitting side by side in the glory of the summer afternoon in Richmond Park; and one or two deer, feeding a few yards off, appeared to regard them with a sublime unconcern. In fact, these deer were so perfectly well accustomed to the sight of couples sitting under the trees that they had ceased to feel the slightest interest in their sayings and doings. The pair had been rambling about the lower park, and had now chosen a resting-place

under the widely-spreading boughs of a giant chestnut. They were talking together, but with little pauses in the talk, and a happy consciousness that it was not always necessary to keep up the conversation.

Beatrice wore a gown of soft black cashmere, plain of make, as was meet for such a bust and such shoulders as hers; a ruff of black tulle set off the creamy whiteness of her throat; and under the black silk toque curled and rippled the bright hair, that waved loosely over her forehead. A bunch of scarlet geranium made the single spot of colour that her dress needed; and Godwin, looking at her with a man's knowledge and judgment of such matters, mentally pronounced her to be faultlessly attired.

It was one of those days when people are charmed into forgetting their troubles, and enjoy the warmth and peace and sweetness of the summer world, as if their childhood had come back. To Godwin, the lost sense of content seemed slowly returning, and he was conscious of a boyish pleasure in lying on the warm grass, lulled by the drowsy hum of bees, and fanned by the languid zephyr that stirred the chestnut leaves above his head. There was something infectious, perhaps, in Beatrice's quiet delight in the scene around her—a delight that vented itself in soft little exclamations of gladness. She had given up the vain task of making friends with the deer, who had steadily resisted her blandishments; and was sitting now in a silent ecstasy, watching the tender lights and shadows on the far-reaching slopes.

"How I should like to live in Richmond!" she said, at last.

"Would you? I think you would not find it always an earthly paradise," rejoined the young man who was lying at her feet. "When the last rose of summer has bloomed itself away, and the trees are stripped of leaves, there is very little charm about the place. Trees and grass in warm weather, a lively street in winter; that's my notion of a comfortable life. Unless, indeed, one is rich enough to follow the swallows, and never know winter at all."

"The swallows—yes, they are enviable things," said Beatrice, in a musing voice. "Only, if I had made a neat little nest, with such pains and skill, I should hardly care to fly away and leave it, even for a time. It is so very seldom that one comes back, after an absence, and finds everything quite unchanged."

"Why should we be afraid of changes?" he asked. "They are often the best things in the world for us."

He was gazing, as he spoke, at the shapely little head, poised, like a flower, on the white throat, and thinking that, where women are concerned, a man's taste often changes for the better. He was getting old, he said to himself, and he was beginning to find a charm in some one quite fresh, and soft, and unworldly.

"When you are older," he continued, in a sort of paternal way, "you will know that it is a mistake to cling too tenaciously to the

things that belong to the past. I believe that the past invests everything with a fictitious beauty. We are wisest when we shake off the spell of old memories, and live only for the present and the future. The truest wisdom lies in the capacity for forgetting."

"Do you mean all that?" The question was uttered tremulously. "It sounds rather hard and bitter, you know. I don't think I can quite understand it."

"My dear child, how should you understand it?" There was a deep earnestness now vibrating in his quiet tones. "I am thirty, and you are not yet nineteen. Until you have tried your gold, and found it only dross—until you have trusted your friends, and found them fail—until you have loved and lost, you can hardly be said to have had a past."

The look of content faded swiftly out of the girlish face, and the deep blue eyes grew dim. Beatrice knew a moment's sharp pain. She had found out more about his life to-day than she had ever known before, and she had discovered that he had already loved—aye, and perhaps loved still. To have lost is not always to have forgotten. And lost things are sometimes unexpectedly found again.

But she was a proud girl, and her wholesome, womanly pride came to her aid at that moment. What did it matter to her whether Mr. Earle had loved or not loved? She neither moved nor spoke, and she never looked at him; yet, with an unerring instinct, he read almost all that was passing in her heart.

He raised himself from the grass, and the movement brought his face nearer to hers; so near that he could see a faint pink beginning to tinge the cream-white cheek. Then his hand stole up and clasped the little white hand that lay idly in her lap.

As his fingers closed gently, yet firmly over hers, she felt the warm blood rising to her face, and her pulses began to throb wildly. She let him hold her hand for a moment, and then tried to take it away; but it was fast locked in his.

"Are you angry with me, Beatrice?" he asked, softly. "Don't let us quarrel about anything, child. Won't you try to help me to forget my past?"

"How can I?" she asked, in a faint voice.

"By forgiving me for not being as bright as yourself; by remembering that I have lived two or three lives while you have been living one, and making allowance for my gloomy moods; by letting me turn to you for sunshine and refreshment."

Her face lit up again. She smiled a little, and her dimples reappeared.

"Do you really think I can help you?" she said. "I am afraid I'm not always very bright; there are times when I look into the future and see only clouds."

"Then don't look into the future," he entreated. "Or, if you

do, believe that some kind fate will clear the clouds away. Ah, Beatrice, I wish *I* could be sure that fate would be kind to me!"

"Why can't you be more hopeful about yourself?" she asked, half timidly. "I think you have known your worst days. We all say that you are sure to prosper. Why not take heart, and be glad?"

The hand that clasped hers tightened its hold. He looked up to see a sunbeam playing at hide-and-seek on her silky hair, and then gazed out thoughtfully across the great sweep of velvet sward, where the deer grazed peacefully in the warm light. The subdued hum of bees, and the soft rustle of leaves was sounding pleasantly in his ears; and it seemed to her and to him that the silence was almost too sweet to be broken by a human voice. And yet it was the time to speak; and, although they knew it not, their golden minute had come.

Long afterwards, when Godwin Earle looked back upon that hour under the chestnut tree, he often wondered why it was that he did not let the opportunity pass? It is so seldom, alas! that we poor mortals know the time to speak, and the time to keep silence, that he marvelled at his own good fortune. Anyhow, some mysterious instinct—like the sweep of his good angel's wing—prompted him to break that delightful pause, and answer Beatrice's question: "Why not take heart and be glad?"

"Because," he said, suddenly, "because I am the victim of a cruel suspicion; and until I can prove myself innocent, I shall never know perfect peace."

The little hand gave his a gentle pressure; and looking up again he read an unmistakeable expression in the deep eyes.

"Tell me everything, Mr. Earle," said a sweet, trembling voice. "Whatever happens, you will find that you can trust me."

In all the world there could scarcely have been found a lovelier spot for a confidential talk. No other strollers were near; they were completely alone with the old trees, and the antlered herds that merely regarded them as a part of the landscape. Dear old Richmond Park, haunted by the love-whispers of many buried generations, preserves its ancient charm in every nook and corner of its soft green shades; and the man and the girl, who reposed with clasped hands under the leafy chestnut, were conscious that Love was in the atmosphere of the dreamy old place.

The timid entreaty to "tell her everything" went thrilling through Godwin's heart, and there came to him, then and there, the blessed consciousness that he had found a woman who would be not only a lover, but a friend. He was no longer a boy; and he knew that passion dies, sooner or later; while true friendship is endowed with the divine gift of immortality. The man who cannot carry his heaviest crosses to the woman he loves, can hardly be congratulated on the prospect of an old age spent in her society. In early youth the ladylove suffices; in later years he yearns for the trusty *confidante* and

sympathising companion. Sweetheart and friend—would Beatrice be both? “I will tell you everything,” he answered.

And then followed the story of the ruby necklace, briefly and simply told, without that precision of detail which had made the talk so long when Mr. Corder was his listener. Beatrice did not interrupt him with questions; she heard him quietly, her hand resting contentedly in his, her eyes looking tranquilly away into the paradise of light and shade that lay before them. Her simple faith in him received no shock. Only once did her face show the least change, and that was when he spoke of his aunts’ unconcealed distrust; and then indeed the soft cheek flushed, and the red lips were pressed together as if they kept in angry words. He found an indescribable comfort in her perfect composure; the most animated sympathy could not have been half so cheering as her calm, trustful silence.

“And now,” he said, “when the story was done, “I mean to work as hard as I can to pay for the stolen necklace; I shall never know a moment of real ease until I have raised the three thousand pounds at which the thing was valued. My aunts Jane and Dorothy, assisted by Uncle Horace, have, I believe, already paid the countess for her loss; but that does not, of course, satisfy me. I have no means of proving my innocence—I have no hope that the necklace itself will ever be found; but if I live, Beatrice, I will give three thousand pounds to the woman who lost it. After all, it disappeared from my box and my room, and I was responsible for its safety. It is this inability to do justice which has been the bitterest part of my poverty!”

“But the necklace *may* be found,” said Beatrice, hopefully.

“I never dream of such a thing,” he answered, shaking his head. “Think of the many jewel robberies that take place every year, and remember how seldom the jewels ever come to light again! No; the disappearance of the necklace must be set down in the interminable catalogue of riddles unguessed. I have not seen the faintest ray of light upon the matter.”

“Perhaps there was a curse clinging to it—who knows?” said Beatrice, speaking half in jest, half in earnest. “I can’t help thinking of the story of the Moonstone. Don’t you remember the malediction of the dying Hindoo who had guarded the great diamond?”

“I do recollect, perfectly.” He was smiling at her delight in the romantic and mysterious. “And I have lived in India, my child, and have heard all sorts of poetical traditions of precious stones. But I don’t think there was any wonderful story attached to the ruby necklace, although I should say that the curse of a Polish nobleman was as good as any Oriental malediction! Aunt Caroline used to boast outrageously about her rubies. And she used to bore us all about their former owner—a certain Count Gliska. It seemed that Gradizoff must have possessed himself of that poor fellow’s property in the coolest way!”

"What became of Count Gliska?" Beatrice asked.

"I only know that he narrowly escaped Siberia. He was the son of a nobleman who had been a leading patriot. The father took refuge in England, and died in exile. The son was allowed to remain in Poland; but he was mixed up with some insurrection in 1861, and had to fly."

"But how did his jewels come into Count Gradizoff's hands?"

"I can't tell. I never saw Gradizoff, but I have a vague idea that he had once pretended to be Gliska's friend. It is rumoured among us that the count was more than a match for my aunt and her temper. If that is true, he must have been the greatest Tartar on record."

Again there was a silence; a happy silence to both. Beatrice understood, at last, the cause of that dark shadow that had rested on Godwin's life. But oh, how radiant the whole world seemed to-day! How often her fancy would picture these velvet slopes and noble trees! Her eyes shone with quiet joy as she met his glance. And then she looked quickly away, and murmured something about its being time to go and join their party.

They walked slowly back to the Star and Garter, and found Mr. Corder and the Miltons awaiting them in the coffee-room. Old Corder thoroughly understood the art of dining. He had secured a table close to the great window, so that the glory of the sunset might shine upon their feast, and their eyes be gladdened by one of the loveliest views in England. And as Beatrice took her seat by Godwin's side, the golden evening light was on that calm face of hers, and the three elderly people (who loved her well) were aware all at once that she had become strangely beautiful.

"She was merely pretty, a little while ago," Harriet thought. "The bud has blossomed—she has passed from girlhood to womanhood in one day, it seems! I hope I'm not getting imaginative in my old age, but I really think every one must be struck by her beauty at this moment!"

Two grey-haired men, evidently old soldiers, dining at an adjacent table, looked quickly up, and regarded the girl with warm and candid approval. One of them said something to the other; and then a younger man and a young lady, both at the same table, turned their heads; and all these four persons became immensely interested in Mr. Corder's party. The interest, however, was duly controlled by good-breeding; and if Beatrice had not suddenly caught sight of the lady's aquiline features, she would not have observed it at all.

There, seated only a few yards off, was the woman with the pale gold hair—the very girl who had been so friendly with Godwin at the theatre. That they should both have come down that day to Richmond, was only one of those chance coincidences of which life is full to overflowing. Beatrice stole a quick glance at Earle, and saw that he, too, had perceived his old acquaintance, and was slightly, very

slightly, agitated. But a quick instinct told her that she had nothing to fear from this woman's presence now; and a certain happy consciousness brought a tinge of colour into her cream-white cheeks, and a ripple of laughter broke from her ripe lips and reached the attentive ear of Alma Lindrick.

Now Alma, having found a new and promising admirer, had given up any faint intention of returning to Godwin Earle; and yet the sight of "that girl" sitting by his side again was anything but pleasant to her. It was also extremely mortifying to hear the two old men frankly admiring Beatrice, and to be aware that Ernest Barnicott, her own lawful prize, was casting stealthy glances in the direction of the newly-discovered beauty.

But she was sufficiently a woman of the world to hide all disagreeable feelings under a veil of perfect good-humour and self-satisfaction; and as her face always wore one of those set smiles which physiognomists distrust, it was easy enough to play her little part.

As to Godwin, after the first slight shock of seeing her had passed off, he was almost astonished at his own indifference. And yet it was by no means surprising that he should be blind to everything save the winsome face by his side.

The champagne frothed and sparkled within, and out of doors the sky blushed with faint crimson, and faded into soft amber; and the silver winding of the river gleamed out through mist and mellow shade. Beatrice began to think that until this day she had never known what it really was to live. Her strong vitality enabled her to draw out the very essence of every enjoyment; and Godwin, in his turn, drew pleasure from the source of her infinite content. Mr. Corder, whose only happiness now-a-days consisted in the delights of others, had brightened up so wonderfully that the Miltons, who knew the whole story of his sorrows, looked at him and marvelled. And meanwhile, at the adjacent table, a conversation was going on which would have been deeply interesting to the party at the window if they could have heard it.

"And so old Redburn is coming home at last," said Colonel Lindrick to Major Barnicott. The two men were on friendly terms, and the Major was uncle and ex-guardian to Alma's new admirer.

"Yes, at last," Major Barnicott replied. "I never thought he would turn his back on India, but I suppose he has a fancy to be buried here."

"Oh, then you don't think he'll last very long?"

"Well, no. He's a good age, you see; and what with 'brandy pawnee' and malaria and dysentery, I've known him at death's door no end of times. When he has an English home he will find it hardly realizes his dreams; but his mind is set upon it. Besides, he wants to leave his money to somebody."

At the word money, Alma began to listen, and her father's sharp eyes twinkled at her across the table.

"Wants to find an heir, does he?" said the Colonel with an affectation of indifference. "I remember he never had any relations. Poor old boy, he was a great friend of mine."

"He is going to look up the daughter of a man who saved his life," Major Barnicott continued. "He was very nearly done for, once, at a tiger-hunt, and this fellow—a man in the 190th, named Ward—saved him at a great risk, I believe. Soon afterwards, Ward died; and now old Redburn has taken it into his head that he ought to make Miss Ward his heiress. Lucky thing for the girl if he finds her; he must have made a lot of coin out of his coffee, you know."

"Ah," said Colonel Lindrick, musingly, "she will be very easily found, I daresay. What age is she, I wonder?"

"Not much more than a school-girl, I think. Old Redburn is busy, winding up his affairs, and expects to return early next year; or sooner, perhaps. He often spoke of you, Lindrick; I suppose you'll see a good deal of him when he comes home."

"I mean to write to him," answered the Colonel, quietly. "In fact, I am more than half disposed to ask him to come to us at Fairbridge, till he finds a place to settle in. He hasn't been in England for ages, and he'll feel terribly alone just at first. What do you say to my idea, Alma? Could you entertain an old Anglo-Indian who can never forget his liver for a moment?"

"I should be quite glad to see him, papa," replied Miss Lindrick, with exactly the right amount of warmth and readiness. "You know I'm very idle at Oak Lodge; and a guest who was just a little troublesome would give me something to do. And really I should think he would not be more wearisome than Miss Harland was! The state of an old man's liver is quite as interesting as a young woman's heart."

They all laughed a little; and Mr. Barnicott said something tender and appropriate in a low voice.

"Poor Miss Harland bored us dreadfully with her love-affairs," remarked Colonel Lindrick. "I used to wonder at Alma's patience. It was a great relief when she was comfortably married off at last."

The said Miss Harland was young and pretty, and had proved a too-successful rival to Alma to be quite easily forgiven. The talk turned upon the match that she had just made; and Miss Lindrick found an opportunity of displaying a little of that ladylike sweetness which Godwin had once thought so charming. And while they still chatted on, there was a pushing back of chairs, and a slight rustling, and Mr. Corder's party rose from their seats.

Colonel Lindrick nodded civilly to Godwin, but Alma pretended not to see him. Yet she managed in a furtive way to steal a glance or two at Beatrice, and permitted no detail of face, figure, or style to escape her. She watched while the girl put up her small hands to settle her hat, and tucked in some of the soft curly locks that were always escaping from their confinement. And then, without bestow-

ing one look on Godwin's old sweetheart, Miss Ward drew on her gloves, and passed down through the long room with her friends.

"Pretty girl," said Major Barnicott, looking after her with the warmest appreciation in his practised old eyes. "Splendid figure, isn't she? Carries herself uncommonly well, too."

"She came in with Earle," remarked Colonel Lindrick, carelessly. "Unlucky fellow, Earle—he went out as Sir Albert Lane's Secretary, and has been looking about for a berth ever since he came back. I fancy he has picked up some business people, and found something to do at last."

"Every fellow gets into business now," said Mr. Barnicott, who was not overburdened with brains. "Think I shall go in for trade myself, if I get too much bored."

"Then we will still try to keep you well amused," said Alma, with a scornful little smile. "It is quite delightful to know a few people who have nothing to do with buying and selling, and are not always worrying themselves about the money-market, and things of that kind. We are in a fair way to become a nation of shop-keepers, indeed!"

"Oh, I'm quite willing to leave trade alone, if you'll help me to fill up all my leisure hours," said Ernest Barnicott, gallantly. "And we've been getting through the summer very well, haven't we?"

"There is a good deal of it left to get through," Alma answered. "But what with lawn-tennis, and riding and driving, we manage to kill time pretty successfully at Fairbridge."

If they had only known that the girl, who was set down as belonging to the "business people," was the very person of whom old Redburn, the rich coffee-planter, would soon be in search!

But they did not know it; and Alma tried valiantly to persuade herself that she was not one bit annoyed, and that her heart did not ache in the least. Ernest Barnicott's attentions were becoming definite and satisfactory; and if he were not as clever as Godwin, he would probably be easier to manage. It was natural, perhaps, that her thoughts should turn a little sentimentally towards her first lover. "And after all," she thought, "supposing I had had my dream out, and married him, shouldn't I have got heartily tired of shabby gowns and everlasting economy? I think I should; and then he, in his turn, would have got tired of me. Godwin was a man who required a great deal of devotion, and I'm afraid the supply would not have always been equal to the demand."

So she mused about the old days and the new; while two persons, travelling town-wards in a first-class carriage, were so delightfully occupied with each other that they had forgotten even the fact of her existence. Beatrice, unwearied by the day's pleasure, had a face as fresh as a white rose; the evening wind smote her, and stirred her hair, as Godwin sat on the opposite seat and looked at her with earnest eyes.

Old Corder and the Miltons had left the pair to themselves, and even Harriet appeared not to notice them in the least. And yet all these elderly people knew perfectly well what was going on, and their elaborate pretence of unconsciousness did not deceive each other for a moment.

"When shall we have another day like this?" Godwin asked. "I shall remember this sunset in my dreams. Do you recollect our first railway journey together?"

"Yes," she said, with a quick little smile. "What a forlorn creature I was then, and now I seem to have a host of friends."

"You were not half as forlorn as I was. How little I thought that I was ever destined to enjoy life again, as I have enjoyed it to-day."

"There are plenty of bright to-morrows coming," she declared, softly. "I am beginning to have great faith in the future." The impulsive words were followed by a blush, and she looked away from him, and out into the deepening twilight.

"I must not talk to you about the future yet," he said. "There is work that must be done first; but hope will help me. You know now what it is, and why I must do it."

"Yes, I know," she murmured. And then, suddenly breaking the hush that fell on them both, she added, in a different tone: "To-morrow I am to take my first singing-lesson. One day you must know Mr. Vordenberg. I am sure he wants to be a kind friend to me."

"That is not wonderful," he replied. "But it isn't a bad reason for knowing him."

"Oh, but there are other reasons, better still. He is lonely and sad, and while he gives me lessons, I mean to give him sympathy. You will help me to cheer him, won't you?"

(To be continued.)



MAY-TIME.

WE all have our visions and fancies
 And live in dim worlds of our own,
 Fond day-dreams and idle romances
 Belong not to childhood alone ;
 Though on to the close of life's story
 Our pleasures are watered by tears,
 Though sorrow still shadows the glory
 Of fugitive years.

As season is followed by season,
 And their fruits and glad blossoms decay,
 We say time has sobered our reason
 And sigh that our locks are so grey ;
 While still in the depth of our nature.
 Sublime and immortal as truth,
 Dwells changeless in aspect and feature
 The soul of our youth.

The garlands of May-day may perish,
 But the blossoms around us to-day,
 Re-kindle within us and cherish
 Thoughts only awakened by May :
 The odours of Spring without number
 Restore to all those who pass by,
 Recollections that often may slumber,
 But never can die.

And thus in the midst of our mourning,
 May happier anthems arise ;
 Thus joy from long exile returning,
 Still takes weary souls by surprise :
 For pain is of earth, is diurnal,
 And soon is forgotten or slain ;
 But love is divine and eternal,
 And always will reign.

A. W.



M. ELLEN STAPLES.

R. TAYLOR.

"IT WILL BE OVER IN A MOMENT," SHE MURMURED TO REGINA.

THE ARGOSY.

JUNE, 1887.

LADY GRACE.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER IX.

MISS DYNEVOR AND THE GIRLS.

IT was not an ordinary match ; it was something quite out of the common way ; but Mary Dynevor was a girl out of the common way also. Not, however, as regarded beauty : in that respect she could not compete with her sister, Grace, or with her brilliant friend, Gertrude Baumgarten. She was a lady-like girl, with a pale serene face, very much like that of her sister, Cyrilla, whose love had been blighted ; her hair was of a rich brown, her eyes were violet blue ; she was quiet in manner, and calm in speech. That was the best that could be said of her, and yet it was certain that some unusual charm did attach itself to Mary Dynevor.

In the past year, when abroad with Lady Grace Baumgarten, Mary had made the acquaintance of Everard Wilmot, an attaché to one of the Continental embassies, and the son of Sir John Wilmot. Exceedingly to her own surprise, he had asked her to become his wife. In the impulse of the moment she went, letter in hand—for he had made the offer in writing—to Lady Grace.

"What am I to do?" she asked.

"What a fortunate girl you are!" exclaimed Lady Grace, when she had digested its contents. "He is the eldest son, you know, and old Sir John's worth twenty thousand a year, if he's worth a shilling. What news for your father!"

"Then you think that—I—should—accept him?" repeated Mary Dynevor.

"Accept him!" retorted Lady Grace : "why, what else would you do?"

"I don't know. I don't particularly care for him."

"What a strange girl you are! You do not like anyone else, I conclude?"

"Oh dear, no," returned Mary ; "what an idea!" But the idea

had served to bring up the deepest and most confusing blushes to her face. They looked a little suggestive to Lady Grace Baumgarten.

"But—before accepting an offer of this kind, I thought it was necessary—or usual—to—to ——" Mary broke down.

Lady Grace burst into a merry laugh. "You thought it was necessary first of all to fall in love. I see. Well, it is sometimes done, Mary; but it is not absolutely essential. My opinion was that something was impending, for Everard has been here much."

"But I never imagined he came for me."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lady Grace, not choosing to say that she herself had never imagined it either. "For whom, then, did you think he came?"

Another accession of colour, and a slightly evasive tone. "Not for anyone—of course; I had no definite thoughts upon the subject."

"One word, Mary. Do you dislike Mr. Wilmot?"

"I like him very much; and I esteem him greatly."

"And yet you come to me, and demurely say, 'What am I to do?' Go away with you, you shy, foolish girl."

So Mary accepted Mr. Wilmot. Nevertheless, she felt half conscious that if she had had the courage to search out the hidden secrets of her heart, it might have told her that her love was given to Charles Baumgarten.

Some few years had elapsed since the sudden death of the Dean of Denham. It was a terrible shock, that, to his wife and children. His affairs were arranged by the help of Lord Avon; Cyrus and Charles both doing also something towards it. A small sum of money, left to the boys by a relative, but of which the Dean had enjoyed the interest for his life, they had at once sacrificed. Cyrus had returned to New Zealand. He was still in the same shipping house there, Brice and Jansen's, and held a good position in it now. He had not visited England a second time, but wrote occasionally. Sometimes his letters would contain a pretty-looking little cheque for Charles or for Gertrude.

Charles had done well at Oxford; had taken honours and gained his fellowship. He was called to the Bar, and lived at his chambers in Pump Court for economy's sake; now and then staying for a few days with his mother in Berkeley Square, Lady Grace's residence. Her income was small. She had only two thousand a year of her own, which would go to Charles and Gertrude in equal shares at her death; but Lord Avon considerably augmented it. He had been a good brother to her. Charles hoped to get on well in his profession in time, and had taken to go circuit; this would be his second year of it.

It was February by the calendar. Judging by the wind, one might have called it March, for dust whirled in the streets, and windows rattled. But Miss Dynevor's drawing-room in Eaton Place was cheerful with its fire and wax lights. Dr. Dynevor was rather in the habit of calling it "My town house" when speaking of it, but it was his

sister's and not his. His name was really Maude-Dynevor, though he was rarely called by it. Some people dropped the one name and some dropped the other. His wife's family name was Maude, and when he married her he had had to take it in addition to his own.

When Dr. Baumgarten was made Dean of Denham, Dr. Maude-Dynenor was one of the prebendaries of the same cathedral. The word "prebend," or "prebendary," was then almost universally used for the higher cathedral dignitaries: "canon" rarely. Two or three years later, Dr. Dynevor was made prebendary of Oldchurch, and quitted Denham. He was at Oldchurch still, its sub-dean. He had a large family of boys and girls, and ruled them with an iron hand. He was a dark, stern, ugly man, who walked with his head thrown back in haughty pomposity, and his perky nose turned up to the air. Caroline, his second daughter, had married a man very much older than herself, Colonel Sir Thomas Hume, and was in India; but the Doctor had four daughters on his hands still. The eldest of them, Cyrilla, rarely came to town.

Perhaps, though, it may be said that they were on Miss Dynevor's hands, rather than on his. She had all the trouble of them. Since Mrs. Maude-Dynevor's death some years back, his sister had taken much charge of them. Occasionally she was with them at Oldchurch, more frequently they were with her in London. The girls were not at all grateful. Ann Esther Dynevor was rather eccentric and wore a flaxen wig, and her nieces took advantage of her peculiarities to tease her. She was a rich woman and very generous to them.

When Lady Grace Baumgarten returned from her visit to the Continent in the past October, and resigned his daughter Mary into Dr. Dynevor's charge—he had travelled from Oldchurch to Eaton Place to receive her—and laid before him Mr. Wilmot's very handsome proposals, the Sub-dean was intensely gratified, and expressed obligation and satisfaction to Lady Grace. Mary and her sisters, Regina and Grace, had remained that winter with their aunt. With February changes had come. Sir John Wilmot was dead, Sir Everard was on his road home, and Doctor Dynevor came up from Oldchurch, and was in Eaton Place. According to the Sub-dean's computation, Wilmot might be in London now. He was anxious to see his future son-in-law. In his private opinion he set him down as a milksop. Who else, with a title and good rent-roll, would have been attracted by Mary, a quiet, pale girl with nothing in her? The Canon was not complimentary to his daughters, either in public or private, and was given to underrate their merits.

Dinner was over and all were in the drawing-room except the Sub-dean. He was fond of his port wine, and did not quit the table with the young and frivolous. On one of the large old-fashioned sofas sat Miss Dynevor in her flaxen wig; her head had drooped on to the sofa pillow and she was fast asleep. On another sofa sat the three girls in a half-circle; and, perched on one of its arms was their brother

Richard ; on the other arm sat the young man who had dined with them.

This was Charles Baumgarten. Nearly six-and-twenty years of age, not very tall, but stately and handsome, he was the very image of what his father had been as a young man ; not resembling his sister Gertrude, not resembling his mother, Lady Grace ; only his dead father. Richard Dynevor was little and insignificant.

The Sub-dean's sons were the plague of his life. Not that they were worse than other sons, but there were several of them to get on in life, and the Dean was poor ; and to supply their wants was often an inconvenience to him. Richard was studying for the Bar ; but was not yet called to it. He had wanted to go into the Church ; but the Sub-dean had two sons in it, or going into it, and would not put in a third.

"Isn't it a shame !" suddenly exclaimed Regina Dynevor in the subdued tone they had adopted for their conversation. "She says her limbs are getting bad again, and that she can't chaperon us to-morrow night !"

"Regina !" interposed Grace, in a tone of sharp reproof ; although Regina was the eldest, and she was the youngest.

"I declare that she said it," returned Regina, the whole party having imperceptibly glanced at the opposite sofa, so that there could be no mistaking who was alluded to. "We were in her dressing room, just before dinner. 'My limbs are getting bad again : ' those were the very words she used."

"Very possibly : but there was no necessity for you to repeat them. We are not alone."

"We are," said Regina. "Who's Charley Baumgarten ? Nobody."

"Nobody, as you say," interposed Charles.

"Regina's tongue will be the bane of her life," cried Grace. "Of course we are used to Charley, but it would have been all the same, had there been a roomful of strangers present. She says anything that comes uppermost in her mind."

"Like papa," carelessly spoke Regina.

"Yes ; but what is proper for papa is unladylike for you," returned Grace, who liked to set the world to rights.

"Go on, Gracie," laughed Richard ; "keep them in order. What else did Aunt Ann say ?"

"Nothing. I hope it's not true, though, that she is going to be ill. We shall all be kept prisoners, as we were last season."

"I'd rather run away than put up with it," protested Regina, fiercely.

"It's not rheumatism but temper from which she is suffering."

Charles Baumgarten laughed.

"It is quite true, Charley : even you don't know her yet. I protest that it was half and half last year : a little rheumatism, and a great deal of cross-grained fractiousness. If she does have this attack, mind, I shall have brought it on."

"You ! what next, Regina ?"

"Little Archdeacon Duck called this morning ——"

"Archdeacon Duck—who is he ?" interrupted Charles Baumgarten.

"It's the girls' name for him; she means Archdeacon Drake," explained Richard. "Let her go on, Charley."

"Well," said Regina, "you all know how Aunt Ann has been setting her cap at him, thinking, perhaps, he might convert her into Mrs. Duck the second. The little Archdeacon was beginning with his foolishly complimentary speeches—it's my belief, he learns them by heart, and says them to every woman he meets—and brought in something about aunt's 'locks, of which the weather, windy or wet, never disturbed the beauty.' 'Or if it does,' I put in, 'Aunt Ann Esther can send them to the hairdresser to be renewed: she is more fortunate than we poor young damsels.'"

"Regina ! you never said it !"

"Indeed I did. She looked daggers, and the Archdeacon looked foolish. There's nothing she hates so much, either, as being called Ann Esther. I was determined to pay her off," avowed Regina ; "she had driven me wild all the morning with her aggravations. And now I expect she intends to pay us off, by having an attack of rheumatism."

"A blessed thing for you girls if you were married and away," said Richard cynically ; "but you'll never find another Aunt Ann. I don't know where I should be for pocket money without her. I say, girls, I think Wilmot has landed."

"Then, if so, he'll be here to-night," said Regina. "And Mary is as cool over it as a cucumber ! One would think ——"

The Sub-dean entered. Regina cut short her speech, and Charles Baumgarten slipped off his perch on the sofa, and took his seat decently in a chair. In the presence of Dr. Dynevor, his family put on their best behaviour. He walked up to the fire, and stood with his back to it, his shoe buckles glittering in the wax-lights. A dead silence had fallen in the room ; Miss Dynevor dozed on, and in the midst of it the arrival of a visitor was heard.

Whether they felt who it might be, cannot be told : the silence of expectation was on all, and their eyes turned to the door as it was thrown open.

"Sir Everard Wilmot."

Dr. Dynevor and his buckles bustled forward with his right hand stretched out. He had pictured to himself a foolish young man, with an insipient moustache and an eye-glass : he saw before him a right noble-looking form, with a noble face, a man who had left thirty years behind him. Miss Dynevor tumbled upright in consternation, and pushed up her flaxen curls too high in her flurry.

A warm greeting to the Sub-dean, a quiet greeting to Mary, holding her hand for a moment only, an introduction to the rest of the party, including Charles Baumgarten, and then Sir Everard sat down.

"Look at Mary," whispered Richard to his sister Regina. "Is she fainting?"

Regina started up and turned to her. Mary's whole frame was shivering, and her face had turned of a deathlike whiteness. But she was not fainting.

"It will be over in a moment," she murmured to Regina. "Don't notice me, for the love of Heaven! Talk to them: do anything: stand before me: draw attention from me." And soon the colour came into her face again.

"Catch me turning sick and faint for the dearest lover that ever stepped!" thought Regina, as she began clattering the teacups on the table, sharply inquired how her aunt's legs felt now, and pushed Charles Baumgarten towards the bell-rope, telling him to ring for the urn. All with the good intention of keeping observation from Mary.

"Perhaps you would prefer coffee, Sir Everard?"

He smiled. "I should prefer tea. I long to fall into the good old English customs again. A traveller on the sandy desert never longed for the sight of water more than I have, these many months, longed for home."

"Then why didn't you come to it?" sensibly questioned Regina.

"First of all, I could not be spared, and was forced to remain at my post," replied Sir Everard. "Secondly, my father was with me, and he believed England would not be the proper climate for his declining health. We all have to bow to circumstances, you know, Miss Dynevor."

"Very disagreeable circumstances, too, sometimes," returned the young lady. "But, Sir Everard, I am not Miss Dynevor, and you will incur my aunt's everlasting displeasure if you accord me the honour of the title. She is Miss Dynevor—at present—and I am Miss Regina."

There was a shade of malice and so much point in Regina's last sentence that some of them smothered a titter. Sir Everard turned to Miss Dynevor, and entered into conversation with her, with marked courtesy.

"Dear Aunt Ann is a great sufferer," cried Regina. "She has rheumatism in her legs."

"A pity but that you had it in your tongue," returned Miss Dynevor, provoked into a retort: and Dr. Dynevor wheeled round and stared in anger at his daughter Regina.

"So you are getting tired of a Continental life," he observed to Sir Everard. "I never was abroad: don't know what it is like over there."

"We get tired in time of all things but home, sir. I hope never to go abroad again—except for a temporary sojourn."

"Mary came home enraptured with Germany," exclaimed Grace Dynevor. "To hear her account of it, we thought she could only have alighted in some terrestrial paradise."

Sir Everard glanced at Mary, and half smiled. A sudden flush suffused her white face, and she looked terribly embarrassed.

After tea they dispersed about the two rooms, which opened to each other. One of the girls sat down to the piano, the others gathered round it, leaving the Sub-dean and Sir Everard alone, standing on the hearth-rug.

"My daughters delight in having a little fling at their aunt, especially Regina," he began, confidentially, as if he deemed their behaviour needed an apology. "Ann keeps them rather strictly, and they rebel against it. Richard, too, and Charley Baumgarten help to keep up the ball against her, I fancy."

"He is the son of Lady Grace, I presume?"

"Her son, and her idol."

"He is a fine young man; has a particularly nice countenance."

"I don't know that countenances go for much," remarked the Reverend Doctor. "Charles has something in him, and is steady as Old Time. He did well at College, and gained his fellowship."

"Does he follow a profession?" inquired Sir Everard. "Lady Grace used to talk to me about him, but I really have forgotten details."

"I don't know how he would expect to get on in the world without a profession. Dean Baumgarten died worse than poor, as you may have heard. Charles is called to the Bar, and is already getting into some practice."

"There's an elder son, is there not?"

"Of the Dean's, yes; not of Lady Grace's. The Dean was married twice. Cyras lives at Wellington, in New Zealand; he has not been in England for years."

"*Cyras!*" exclaimed Sir Everard with emphasis. "Is that his name? And he lives, you say, at Wellington? Is he in a shipping-house there—Brice and Jansen's?"

"I believe that is the firm," replied the Sub-dean haughtily, who would have thought it beneath him to know well the name of any one in trade.

"Then I must have made a passing acquaintance with him when I was at Wellington two or three years ago," remarked Sir Everard. "But I thought his name was Brice. I am sure he called Mr. Brice uncle."

"Not unlikely: they are connected in some way. But his name is Cyras Baumgarten."

Sir Everard strolled towards the other room. Mary sat on a sofa, apparently lost in thought, and Charles Baumgarten stood underneath the chandelier, with an open book. Sir Everard sat down by Mary.

"It has been a long separation, Mary," he whispered. "Did you think I was never coming?"

"Yes, it has been long," she faintly said. Her hands were trembling, her heart was beating; she spoke—and looked—as if she were frightened.

"But from no fault of mine," he returned. "Had you permitted a regular correspondence, you would have known this."

"My aunt said it was more proper not to correspond—except by an occasional letter at stated seasons. I explained this to you after I returned."

A smile passed across Sir Everard's face. "I am aware—I remember; and I dare say it has all been very 'proper,' if not affectionate. But the past is over and gone, Mary, and now we need fear no further ——"

He did not say what. A hasty glance had shown him that no one was looking. Charles Baumgarten, buried in his book, stood with his back towards them: the rest were round the piano, singing. He bent his face down to Mary's and his lips touched her cheek.

"Oh, don't! don't!" she shrinkingly uttered.

"Nay, my dearest, would you deny it to me? It is a reward long waited for."

She gasped for breath as she stood up and caught the corner of the mantelpiece. Her face had turned painfully white again.

The song over, the conversation became general, and presently Sir Everard rose to leave.

"Will you tell Lady Grace, with my kind regards, that I anticipate the pleasure of seeing her to-morrow?" said Sir Everard to Charles, as he held out his hand.

Charles did not choose to see the hand; and he replied coldly and stiffly. "I do not reside with Lady Grace, and shall not be likely to meet her to-night or to-morrow."

"He has his mother's pride," thought Sir Everard. But Sir Everard was mistaken.

Mary slipped out of the room afterwards, and she had not returned to it when Charles said good-night.

As he passed a small parlour, on his way out, usually devoted to the studies and pursuits of the young ladies, Charles's ear caught the sound of something very like a sob. He halted and looked in. There were no candles in the room, but the fire was blazing away, and in its light stood Mary. He went in and shut the door behind him. She smoothed the traces of tears from her face, but could not hide its ghastly look. Charles turned white also, and confronted her upon the old, worn hearthrug.

"The time for concealment has passed, Mary, as it seems to me," he began. "We have gone on, like two children, making believe to hide things from one another. This is the awaking! What is to be done? You cannot enact a lie, and marry that man!"

"Oh, Charles! what are you saying?" she uttered, in a wailing tone.

He stood quite still for a moment, looking at her. "Do you wish to marry him?"

"I would rather die."

"Yes, for you love me—nay, don't I tell you the time for

concealment is over, and this night is the awaking. You love me—and oh, my darling! how I love you, I cannot stay now to tell. Nor need I: for you have known it without my telling you.”

“I am terrified,” she whispered. “I am nearly terrified to death at the thought of what is before me. Think of the wrong I have done to him!”

“And I think of my position, my poverty,” returned Charles Baumgarten. “If I spoke to your father he would turn me out of the house and keep me out of it. We have just gone on, living in a fool’s paradise, Mary, shutting our eyes to the future, I shutting mine to honour.”

“Not a word must be breathed to my father,” she whispered, eagerly.

“Would you marry Everard Wilmot?” sharply cried Charles Baumgarten. “But that I forced control upon myself with an iron will, I should have struck him when he kissed you to-night.”

She cried out with pain. “You saw it, then?”

“Saw it! I felt it. Felt it as if it had been a sharp steel, piercing my heart. Oh, the curse of poverty! I seem to be helpless in the matter. Mary, I can only trust in you.”

“A dim idea came over me, while I sat with him on the sofa, of speaking to him,” she said, in a tone of abstraction. “But I don’t know how I could do it. He is so good a man, so honourable, so kindly; one of those men you may trust. I wish he had never taken it in his head to ask me to marry him! I wish I had followed my own impulse at the time—and declined him.”

“Why did you not do so?” he returned.

“I had not the courage: and I—did not care for you so much then as I do now,” she whispered.

“We have nearly our whole lives before us, Mary, and they must not be sacrificed to misery,” he urged. “Mary, you must wait for me: I know I shall get on.”

“Leave me to think it over for to-night,” she answered. “I must try and see what ought to be done—and do it.”

“That will not do,” he impetuously said. “If you put it upon ‘duty’ and that sort of thing, you will marry him.”

“Charles!” It was her turn to reprove now. “I said I would try and see what I ought to do, meaning my duty, neither more nor less. It is not my duty to marry where I do not love.”

“Mary, I beg your pardon. All this has driven me half out of my mind.”

“Leave me now,” she repeated. “Indeed, I tremble lest any of them should come and find you here. Good-night.”

He put his arm round her to kiss her: but she started away. “Charles! at present, remember, I am engaged to *him*.”

It was of no use. “I must take away the one that he left,” whispered Charles Baumgarten.

(*To be continued.*)

MRS. HENRY WOOD.

In Memoriam.

I.

IT has been the fate of many great works to be rejected in the first instance by the publishers. Not until one amongst them has discerned the vein of gold beneath the new and unknown surface have they been brought to light.

An old saying tells us that we can only understand Shakespeare by the Shakespeare that is within us. Genius must be original, and for this reason is often slowly recognised. The tendency of the human mind is conservative. A new departure is looked upon with suspicion. The unfamiliar seldom pleases. The new and the strange can never charm as did the old. We love our old haunts and associations. Man returns to the scenes and loves of his boyhood with more delight and longing the farther this period of life recedes into the past. For those were the days of first and vivid impressions. The mere delight of existence was sufficient; the full warmth of sunshine that as yet cast no shadow; the looking out upon a world, and behold everything was beautiful and good.

This dislike to the new and the unfamiliar has no doubt been a reason why many a work of genius has been so slowly recognised. Sometimes, indeed, only after death has its author received due appreciation. It has been the case in all branches of art: literature, painting, music, science, all have equally suffered at times.

The saddest thought is that of a great genius, with all its cravings for recognition, singing its song to soulless ears and going out of the world unhonoured and unknown. The tardy recognition can never make atonement; the pain of a past silence, deep as the soul within, can never be lifted.

How often one has longed to bring them back to earth, crown their brow with laurels, heap the glories of the world upon them and its riches; for want of which they have sometimes perished; raise them on a pedestal far above all ordinary humanity. But in vain.

"Can honour's name provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death?"

II.

EVERYONE knows the story of *Fane Eyre*, which went the round of the publishers and met only with rejection until it fell into the hands of Mr. Williams, who sat up all night to read it. *East Lynne* did not go the same round as *Fane Eyre*, yet it might have done so but for the late Mr. Richard Bentley's judgment in the matter.

It was first offered to Messrs. Chapman and Hall, as the publishers of the magazine in which *East Lynne* first appeared : and also because Mrs. Henry Wood had a slight and pleasant acquaintance with Mr. Frederick Chapman.

They rejected it on the report of their reader. Yet they were themselves so convinced of the merits of the work, that Mr. Chapman told Mrs. Henry Wood they did what they had never done before : returned the work to their reader for reconsideration.

A second time the report was unfavourable, and *East Lynne* was finally declined.

"I think you are making a mistake," my mother remarked to Mr. Chapman. "I am sure the book will be a success."

"I think so, too," he replied. "But we have made it a rule never to publish upon an unfavourable verdict, and it is a rule we have never yet broken."

That they did not break it in this instance, he afterwards admitted how great was their regret.

East Lynne was then offered to Messrs. Smith and Elder. Perhaps it did not fall into the hands of Mr. Williams, who had appreciated *Fane Eyre*. Or perhaps it did so, and found no favour with him. However this may have been, Messrs. Smith and Elder also very politely declined the work. When it was returned, it had every appearance of never having been opened.

It next came under the consideration of Mr. Bentley, who at once accepted it.

"I should not publish it," he said to my mother, "but I believe it will be successful."

I remember her repeating the remark to my father, and his reply. "I suppose that may be taken for granted," he laughed.

Mr. Bentley asked for a motto, and my mother chose one out of Longfellow :

"Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption
Rise like an exhalation the misty phantoms of passion :
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.

* * * * *

This is the cross I must bear ; the sin and the swift retribution."

A more fitting motto could not have been taken. It so adjusted itself to the book that it might have been written for it. With Mr. Bentley it found so much favour that he said he should advertise it with the title, and did so.

III.

LONGFELLOW was one of Mrs. Henry Wood's favourite poets. She was in perfect sympathy with his feeling and sentiment: The pure and elevated tone of his writings was in exact accordance with her own mind and nature. Nearly all her mottoes are taken from him.

She saw in him more thought than is generally admitted, and always said it was easier to find a motto in Longfellow than in any other poet. Perhaps this was partly because their minds ran, as it were, in the same groove. They both took the same high standard of life, its end and aims and responsibilities, and the necessity for making it upwardly progressive.

But my mother did not read all the poets. Shakespeare, Longfellow, Byron, parts of Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, and some of the very old song writers : these were nearly all she cared for. Yet her mind was stored with poetry. There was hardly an old and famous song that she could not repeat by heart the moment it was referred to her. Longer poems she equally remembered, and stores of Shakespeare. Of Goldsmith she never tired, and she also knew by heart very much of his poetry and prose. These things had never been learned, but simply acquired by the power of a strangely retentive memory. Shakespeare, it has already been remarked, she began to be familiar with from the time she was ten years old.

If asked to do so, she would sometimes recite to us in the twilight, by the hour together, poem after poem, with a power that was quite remarkable ; an intonation and emphasis that seemed to bring out new meanings and hidden charms, and revealed all her depth of feeling ; whilst her soft and silvery voice, clear and distinct, sweet and low, at all times held us under a spell.

With the modern Æsthetic School, it is perhaps unnecessary to say she had no sympathy, and did not attempt to read it. The mind's poetical bias is formed in early life, and in my mother's earlier days the Æsthetic School was a thing of the future. Independently of this, her mind could never have accepted it. With all her love for poetry, she took too clear and earnest a view of the seriousness of life ; and in spite of the extreme romance of her nature, she had not a spark of strained or unhealthy sentiment within her.

Some of Christina Rossetti's writings pleased her very much ; especially a short poem of four or five verses, called *Amor Mundi*, which she thought particularly beautiful and true.

Another of her favourite poems, for its simplicity and truthfulness to life, came out some years ago anonymously : *The Twin Genii*, written by Mrs. Plarr. The genii in this instance are Pleasure and Pain. This poem she introduced into one of her Johnny Ludlow stories, not then knowing who had written it.

Upon this, Mrs. Plarr wrote to me and said how much flattered she had felt at seeing her poem quoted in *Johnny Ludlow*. For, like many others, she had given me undeserved credit, and placed me on a pedestal of fame to which I had no claim. It was difficult to contradict at the time the rumour that I was the author of *Johnny Ludlow* without running the danger of betraying the secret.

I remember Mary Cecil Hay—whose death last year was so sad and touching—saying that the first time she ever saw me she said

very emphatically to herself: "That is Johnny Ludlow." When the author's name was declared, she was puzzled and confused about it, and for long after found it incomprehensible.

So also with Miss Emily Leith, herself a poetess, and niece to Mrs. Plarr. The authorship of *Johnny Ludlow* had just been declared, when I happened to meet her at a reception at Miss Dickens's.

"I am bewildered," she said. "I thought *you* were the author of *Johnny Ludlow* and wrote all those stories. I cannot tell what to make of it."

There was an immense amount of condemnation in her tone, as if I had injured society at large and committed an unpardonable sin.

"I know the rumour has gone abroad, and regret it," I answered. "People chose to take up the idea, and you must see how difficult it was to contradict it. Nevertheless, the mistake is puzzling. Johnny Ludlow treats of a time, and circumstances, and people, and a condition of society, all belonging to a period before I was born: all described with a realism which, it is easily seen, is the result of personal observation and familiarity. All this crowd of people were part of my mother's life and experience. The old Squire and Tod and Johnny were her personal friends. They existed, and were not mere creations of fancy. The stories betray, too, an intimate acquaintance with almost all the highways and byways of Worcestershire, a county of which I scarcely know anything. No one could write *Johnny Ludlow* who had not spent many years in Worcestershire."

"For all that, I cannot understand it," was the retort. "How can Mrs. Henry Wood be the author of *Johnny Ludlow*? Surely only a man could write these stories?"

And here was unconsciously given a reason for the long and well-keeping of the secret. The *Times*, in reviewing *East Lynne*, remarked that they had never met with any lady author who had been equally successful in portraying the characters of *men*. This masculine element and atmosphere are especially evident in *Johnny Ludlow*. The spirit of boyhood and manhood so runs through every page, that no one, friend, stranger or critic, ever guessed the truth. Johnny himself is so real and lifelike, that no one would suspect his being the creation of a feminine hand.

Beyond ourselves, the printers alone knew who wrote *Johnny Ludlow*. I have had many a moment's amusement with my mother about this confusion of authorship. Many entertaining anecdotes and incidents have arisen from it; but to me they were also attended with a certain sense of discomfort. The burden of a praise and credit to which you have no right is a hard one to bear, and at last becomes intolerable.

It was the effect of the ever-increasing rumour which at last caused the secret to be given up. Continual dropping will wear away a stone, and, after many a request on my part, my mother at length yielded to my wish that the authorship of *Johnny Ludlow* should be declared.

So when the Second Series of *Johnny Ludlow* appeared under Mrs. Henry Wood's name, the world was astonished and incredulous. Even then some refused to believe their eye-sight, whilst others seemed to go so far as to doubt the statement.

And how true is it that—

“You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

Many still seem unaware that I never wrote a line of *Johnny Ludlow*, and that to Mrs. Henry Wood alone all credit is due. Even Mary Howitt writes to me from her home in the Tyrol, and says: “Will you tell me of yourself? Are you still working at the *Johnny Ludlow* Series, of which I believe you are the author?”

And what could I reply, except that: “Your question proves how very much you must have withdrawn from the world. My mother wrote every line that ever appeared under the name of Johnny Ludlow. She was Johnny Ludlow, and not I.”

“A mystery as well kept as the author of *Junius*,” remarked another writer not long ago.

IV.

To return to the earlier days: and to beg the reader's indulgence if for a moment I speak of myself.

From the time that I was nine years old, I began to take the deepest interest in my mother's writings: as vivid then, I believe, as in any subsequent year of my life. Her short stories ever bore for me the greatest charm. I counted the days when the magazines were due in France; and when they arrived, read them with eagerness and excitement. Whilst my mother, seated in an inner drawing-room of her house, wrote her stories for the following month, I, near the fire in winter, or amongst her beautifully-arranged flowers in summer, read those that had just appeared.

Like Mr. Francis Ainsworth in maturity, my childish mind would wonder where and where it all came from: these inexhaustible stories, of which each seemed to me more beautiful than the last. I have spent many an hour gazing in such passionate rapture and adoration as surely boy never yet gave to mother, marvelling even then at the strange beauty and refinement of the face—“that delicacy and refinement of features and complexion,” as Mary Howitt now writes of her—bending over her manuscript; every now and then looking up with her marvellous eyes, to pause a moment for a particular word or expression: and I have watched, until I could watch no longer, the delicate and exquisite hand tracing its course over the paper.

In her dress—to bring her more vividly before the reader—she was ever the same; so that we ever had one distinct and unvarying impression of her. She never wore anything but the plainest, but richest, black silk, trimmed with costly and drooping laces that so

wonderfully set off all her beauty and refinement. Only in the heat of summer would the heavier material be discarded for light and flowing substances, which seemed almost more fitted to her delicate and fragile frame. She was at all times dressed in the perfection of taste. And she possessed another and a very great virtue: at any moment of her life, had the most exalted personage in the country called upon her, she would have been found ready to receive them. She always left her room soon after eight o'clock in the morning, perfectly and completely dressed. There was no exception to this in any day of her life.

Even in those early days of which I have been speaking, I felt: as a child feels, that, unable to analyse its thoughts, yet often unconsciously stumbles upon the truth: even then I felt how different was that wonderful face and spirit from all others: all whom I ever knew or saw or conversed with.

Few, no doubt happily for them, can have had so impressionable a childhood: so painfully sensitive that all my young thoughts and emotions were buried fathoms deep and remained for ever unsuspected; and up to the age of twelve, I was so self-contained and undemonstrative, that I was considered—to use a homely but expressive phrase—the fool of the family.

Where this temperament exists in childhood, it is a misfortune, for it is generally followed in after life by much mental and physical suffering. I was particularly susceptible to the influence of people: was intensely and fearfully happy or miserable with them, according to the impression they made upon me. By some mysterious instinct, I read people's characters in a manner that I cannot even now account for. It was no effort of thought or intelligence, but a something borne in upon me whether I would or no. I was constantly attracted or repelled towards those I met by this strange and uncomfortable power: and it often brought me into trouble. In all troubles, however, I ever had a strong rock of defence in my mother.

Where this unusual instinct exists in childhood, it generally disappears in maturity. Reason takes its place; and reason is proud and despises instinct. But whereas instinct never errs, reason very often does so. In my own case, perhaps the less said about reason the better—for the instinct remains.

On one occasion, when I was only eight years old, this strange instinct was so strongly upon me that had my father only followed its guidance (who would do anything but laugh at the instinct of a child of eight?) he would have been spared an almost life-long trouble.

With my father, indeed, this very thing brought me into constant hot water, though his amiable nature never went beyond a word of reproof. But I have said that there never existed a less imaginative nature than his, and he had no sympathy with anything outside the region of fact: certainly neither sympathy nor toleration with what he considered the fancies of a child.

My elder brother, who was many years my senior, took advantage of my timid nature, and was the torment of my life. He was the incarnation of mischief, spirited and daring to the last degree; getting into trouble wherever he went, but with his singular good fortune always getting out of it again. Fortunately for me he was seldom at home. Perhaps this is the reason why, in after life, we have become not only brothers but friends.

My father also strongly disapproved of my devotion to fiction, and even my mother would sometimes endeavour to restrain my ardour. But looking back upon those days, I am convinced that this early reading did me not harm but good. The mind was unconsciously preparing itself for the work of life.

In those early days a very different career had been planned out for me. My father and mother both destined me for the Church; and to my mother, with her old cathedral life and associations, the idea was peculiarly agreeable. With my father, I am sorry to have to record—unflattering as it is to myself—that he was chiefly influenced by the persuasion that nature had endowed me with so small a share of brains that I should never be fitted for anything else.

This destiny for the Church was never to be fulfilled; and I went on reading stories until, at a more serious age, a tutor's authority stepped in, and fiction had to become little more than a recreation and relief from harder reading and study.

But those quiet hours and years of childhood, passed almost absolutely and solely in the company of that calm, lovely and gentle spirit, have been of use to me in many other ways. Their recollection has clung to me through life down to the present hour: a remembrance of intense, undying happiness, full of an atmosphere of perfect sympathy, love, and beauty; of absolute and very rare refinement. An influence that was henceforth to be a loadstar: a remembrance that has served me in good stead in many of the dark and clouded hours of my life.

V.

I HAVE said that the stories in the magazines were succeeded by *East Lynne*.

When the work was appearing in *Colburn's New Monthly*, it was a very sad time to us all. For my mother was seriously ill, and as the months went on and brought no relief, it seemed as if she were destined not to recover. Her illness puzzled and baffled all the physicians who attended her, and not one of them could do anything for her.

In the previous years, she had been a martyr to indigestion. I have seen her, day after day, for months at a time, when the attack was upon her, lying upon the floor in most terrible and acute agony.

Neither couch nor reclining chair would do ; nothing but the hard, carpeted floor. The pain would last from one to two hours, and would then leave her, well, but exhausted.

This would last for months, recurring day after day. Then suddenly, without warning, apparently for no cause, it would leave her for months with a perfect freedom from suffering that only so sensitive a nature as hers could appreciate.

About the time that *East Lynne* was appearing, all this culminated in a strange and serious and mysterious illness, causing at times the most intense suffering, and which lasted for eighteen months. No doctor could give relief. One doctor thought one thing, one another ; but none could cure. My mother travelled from one place to another, tried all kinds of different airs, all sorts of remedies. Everything failed.

I remember one special day on which she was unusually depressed, yet, as ever, calm and resigned. She had taken up one of my father's medical books, and referring to maladies, apparently found one that exactly described her case. "This disease is incurable and ends in death," declared the book ; and my mother felt that all hope for her was over.

When her doctor called that same afternoon, she pointed this out to him, expressing her sad conviction.

We most of us know that in reading a medical work, it is quite possible to imagine that we have every symptom it contains. The doctor acknowledged the apparent similarity of cases, but assured his patient that the most important symptom of all was certainly absent, and that she was therefore mistaken. He added that though her illness completely puzzled him, he saw no present reason why she should not recover.

I can never forget the sadness and sorrow of that time : the sickness of hope deferred ; day after day, month after month, hoping against hope ; until at last we almost gave up in despair. Through all, my mother was calm, resigned and cheerful, dreading the worst for our sakes more than for her own. At the end of eighteen months, her powers of endurance seemed drawing to a close.

It was through this illness that she wrote a great portion of *East Lynne*, between the paroxysms of pain and suffering ; sending her MS. now from one place, now from another, wherever she might happen to be.

At length she was cured in a very singular way : and the old saying that desperate diseases require desperate remedies was reversed in her case. The doctors had declared they could do nothing more. She was reduced to the utmost. Yet the beauty of her face had never been so dazzling, so ethereal. Then, indeed, one almost saw the spirit shining through the frail tenement.

One day an old woman, hearing of her illness, called and asked to see her. She was admitted.

"Madam," she said, in quaint, old-fashioned speech, "I can cure you, if you will allow me to do so."

I happened to be in the room at the time, and the determined tones of the visitor sent conviction to the brain and the blood coursing through the heart. It was like restoring life from the dead, changing despair to hope.

But the patient thought it very unlikely that an old woman could succeed where some of the cleverest doctors in England had failed. Yet she listened to this new and singular authority.

The visit was not an interested one. The woman, though in humble life, was quite above the need of charity. For her station, she was in very comfortable circumstances. Her motive, therefore, could not be mistaken.

My mother listened to the prescription, which was so simple that she promised to give it a trial.

The new "doctor" was a woman of singular intelligence, and I afterwards had many a deep argument with her, in which I was not seldom defeated. She was so positive of her case, so certain that cure would follow, that it was impossible not to be affected by her confidence. Moreover, when all else has failed and hope is abandoned, who does not turn to the smallest promise of relief?

"I will try your remedy," said my mother. "I see that it can do no harm if it does no good. And if I am cured," she added laughingly, "it will be by your remedy and not by faith; for I cannot think that anything so simple can cure anything so serious."

"Try it, madam," replied the old woman, as she got up to leave. "Try it, madam; and in three months I will answer for your recovery."

It was tried, and was successful.

Up to this time, the illness had not shown the slightest symptom of yielding. At the end of three months, during which time the remedy was faithfully pursued, health had perfectly returned, and she ceased to suffer. The sun shone again in our sky, we were happy once more.

In the beginning, my mother had mentioned the visit to her doctor, announcing his rival and describing the remedy. Instead of ridiculing it, as she had expected, he advised her to give it a trial, though laughing at the idea of its doing any good. He was astonished and converted by the result, and declared he should prescribe it for some of his patients.

VI.

I WELL remember following *East Lynne* month by month as it came out in the magazine, and being absorbed in the sorrows of the heroine. Her troubles touched me as if she had been a reality: as only boys in the first freshness of youth and feeling can be affected. The unhappy fate of Lady Isabel was my constant theme whenever I

could find a sympathising ear, or one who was in the secret of the story and its author.

The same kind of feeling was shown in Norway in connection with *Lord Oakburn's Daughters*: as a friend, holding there a distinguished position under Government, not long ago informed me.

The book was translated into Norwegian, and appeared in the chief paper in Christiania. It created so much interest and sensation, that in that part of the story where Lord Oakburn dies, friends meeting each other that day in the street, shook hands and greeted each other with the words: "The old lord is dead!"

Amongst those who were in the confidence of the author of *East Lynne* was Mary Howitt, and I remember a letter she wrote to my mother when the story was nearing its close.

"My dear Mrs. Wood," it began:

"I cannot tell you how high an opinion I have of *East Lynne*, but this I will say: that you have only to publish it with your name attached to it, and you will at once become famous."

The work appeared in due time, and I do not think Mrs. Howitt proved an untrue prophet.

VII.

WHEN *East Lynne* came out, my mother's constitution had rallied from the shock of her late illness. Henceforth she was never again prevented from taking her seat day after day in her reclining chair and writing.

Some authors can only write when they are in what they call the mood. Days and weeks will sometimes pass, and, like a silent Quakers' Assembly, "the spirit does not move them." I believe that it was so with Charlotte Brontë, and that sometimes for months together her power completely left her. And I remember Mrs. S. C. Hall telling me that she could not write continuously: after a certain amount of work done, the brain grew tired, and sometimes needed days and weeks of rest.

It was never so with Mrs. Henry Wood. She never knew what it was not to be in a humour for writing. It was not only that she could write, but that she always felt a positive desire to do so. She could not have lived without writing. As Julia Kavanagh once said to me: "It becomes as necessary to us as food or sleep, and cannot be laid aside." With Charles Dickens, the feeling of a gradual loss of power, the fear of losing it altogether, was, I believe, one of the greatest troubles of his later days.

In my mother's case, work was never laid aside, and it never would have been most probably, even had she lived much longer. But in the last two or three years of her life, she found that whilst on some days she could write very rapidly, there were other days when she wrote very slowly indeed. It took her much longer to write her

stories, and cost her much more labour, but it was always a labour of love.

"I feel quite vexed with myself," she remarked to me one day in last autumn. "I write so slowly compared with what I once wrote. It now takes me four months to accomplish the amount of work that I could once have done in as many weeks."

VIII.

I HAVE said that *East Lynne* and many succeeding works were written in a reclining chair; yet I have known my mother begin at nine o'clock in the morning and write until six in the evening. Only for a very short time in the day would her work be put down for a very light luncheon. All through her life, it may be said that she took only one meal a day; the lightest possible breakfast and luncheon, but a late and substantial dinner.

After working from nine until six, she has been as mentally bright and animated as when the day began. But this close work was only done during a time of extreme pressure. When *East Lynne* had appeared, she undertook engagements without realising the amount of labour they would entail upon her. But she was so conscientious, that an engagement made or a promise given was sacred and binding. She never kept anyone waiting an hour for any manuscript.

But the pressure of these particular engagements once over, she never again undertook anything it would be difficult to accomplish. She returned to her original manner and time of writing: from half past eight until half past twelve in the morning, a rule henceforth very strictly followed. It is also singular that whilst in the earlier days she could only write in a reclining chair, in later days, and with the aid of a very simple support for the spine, she was able to sit and write at a table.

This support undoubtedly prolonged her life many years. Without it, she could scarcely have sat up for an hour in the day, certainly could not have written for ten minutes at any table. Had this support been sooner thought of and employed, no doubt the serious mischief arising from the curvature of the spine might have been at least delayed, and life very much prolonged.

Her mind was so fresh and vigorous and active; her face so young and lovely; her energy so unabated; her interest in everything and everyone around her so vivid, so earnest; her sympathies were so unexhausted, so inexhaustible, that we shall ever feel she has left us before her time.

With most people living to a certain age, there is a gradual decay of the bodily and mental faculties: a loosening of the hold on life. Memory fails; feelings grow blunted; the world is waxing dim; the silver thread is relaxing; the golden bowl is breaking. Death comes at last,

naturally, without violence, as a happy release. With the sorrow of parting, there is the consolation of a life completely lived.

With my mother, it was the opposite. Very singularly, as the body weakened, the mind grew brighter and more vigorous, the brain more active and brilliant, the face more youthful and lovely, the eyes more soft and sparkling. In every way she seemed to grow younger. This, in one sense, has made her loss so terrible, so much harder to bear, so absolutely impossible to realise. Time in no way softens the indescribable pain of this impression. It never will. It is the sudden and appalling silence of death, in a moment rending asunder the fullness of life in all its beauty and freshness.

A friend who saw her last year, whilst on a short visit to England from Florence, writes me word that she was more than ever struck with her wonderfully transparent beauty : so much so that she said to herself she feared Mrs. Henry Wood was not long for this world. "It is ever thus," she adds in her letter. "These beautiful natures are always more beautiful as the end approaches."

IX.

I HAVE slightly touched above upon the commonplace subject of meals, and this brings to my mind that I have often heard it remarked that the author of *Danesbury House*, a temperance story, ought to have been an abstainer from wine.

This is where the world misjudges. *Danesbury House* was certainly a *temperance* story, but not one of *total abstinence*. Mrs. Henry Wood never advocated this doctrine or thought it necessary, except in cases of excess. I do not believe a single page of *Danesbury House* advises total and universal abstinence except in extreme cases. But she was equally firm in insisting that for those who had no self-control, the only right and possible course to pursue was that of absolute and complete denial.

For others, on the contrary, she saw virtue in moderation. It is a greater merit to be moderate than to abstain. Even Dr. Johnson found this. "I can abstain," he said, "but I cannot be moderate." And in these cases, to abstain is the one remedy and refuge, and this is the lesson that *Danesbury House* teaches.

Mrs. Henry Wood's creed was Temperance, not Total Abstinence. Whilst laying down strict and very conscientious rules of duty and conduct for herself, which she kept as faithfully and earnestly as the sun keeps its course, she was of those who think that all things are given us richly to enjoy. It was better to show forth our gratitude to the Giver of all Good by a moderate use of earth's bounties and blessings than by rejecting them altogether.

Narrow-mindedness was a state of being with which she had no sympathy : nothing could be more antagonistic to her wide and generous nature. She had not the pointed forehead of the ascetic, but the broad brow of the philanthropist. With her the state of the

heart was everything. Without interfering with the religious views of others, she herself did not hold with fastings and widened phylacteries. The advanced views of the present day : forms and ceremonies, postures and genuflections, candlesticks and processions, priestly garments and incense : with these she had nothing in common. Of the confessional she had the greatest horror. She considered that the great danger of forms and ceremonies was that whilst in the first place they could never avail, there was yet further the almost inevitable risk of substituting the ceremonial for the spiritual.

As a girl, she had attended the good old-fashioned, high-church services of the cathedral, and in such services she joined, heart and soul ; she had mixed with the old-fashioned, high-church dignitaries. Her love for them never changed. But the high-church services of those days would be considered moderate, if not evangelical, in these. In her opinion, religion was not found in forms and dogmas and a special ritual, but in the condition of the heart and the spirit. If these were true and right in the sight of Heaven, all else must be right also.

Her own convictions were as sound as convictions can be that are based absolutely upon the Bible ; they were profound and unchangeable ; she would most certainly have died for her faith ; but she seldom spoke of these matters, and never argued about them. She was a law unto herself, but not a law unto others ; but the strict lines of her life were founded upon the scriptures—she set before her the one MODEL—and upon these she rested. Better than arguments, more forcible than dogmas, more convincing than ceremonials, she led others by the strongest of all powers, the force of example : the absolute and unfailing consistency of a singularly pure and beautiful life.

X.

As soon as the proof sheets of *East Lynne* had been corrected and the book was out, my father and mother went abroad, their first destination being Dieppe.

France had ceased to be their home. But every year they went back for a certain period to the land where so much of their lives had been passed, enjoying once more the society of old friends, the blue skies and balmy airs of France. No visits ever gave them so much pleasure. My mother's face was never more radiant, my father's sunny temperament never more conspicuous than at these times.

On the occasion of this especial visit, after the appearance of *East Lynne*, my mother had regained her health, her beauty, the brilliancy and softness of her complexion, the even flow of her bright and gentle spirits. Though now some years past forty, she looked less than thirty. A more sympathetic and sparkling companion could not have existed : and I remember even now that in those

days, in any public assembly in which she might chance to find herself, where she was unknown, the loveliness of her face as she entered the room would attract universal attention.

Dieppe was then the most fashionable sea-port town in France, and many an after-season of gaiety and pleasure we spent there.

Now it would be picnic parties to the Château d'Arques; now mixing in all the rank and fashion assembled in the Casino or on the terrace overlooking the plage, where all was fun and merriment, and that delicious, unceremonious refinement, of which Dieppe was then essentially the type.

Now it was ambassadors' balls, where one found as much enjoyment, but more state and ceremony. And sometimes it would be quiet, social evenings, where not infrequently mesmerism and spiritualism, then so much talked about, would cause the hours to pass in bewilderment and mystery, and a wonder as to how these things were done.

Amongst all this fashionable and aristocratic crowd, to me the dignified figure and the brilliant conversation of Mrs. Milner-Gibson stand out most conspicuously. She was one of my mother's great friends. So witty and charming and sympathetic—the second most perfect hostess in the world, as the greatest man of his day said of her—that with her and my mother most of my time was spent: a very happy trio. My father was no longer living.

But on their visit to Dieppe after *East Lynne* had appeared, I was not with them. After settling down at their hotel, my mother took up by chance the *Daily News*, and the first thing that caught her attention was a review of *East Lynne*: the first she had seen, one of the first to appear.

"This is a work of remarkable power," it began. "It is concerned with the passions; and exhibits that delicacy of touch and knowledge of the emotional part of our mental structure, which would reveal the sex of the author even without the help of the title page. The great merit of the work consists in an artistic juxtaposition of characters strongly contrasted with one another."

Then followed an analysis of the plot, concluding with:

"The story displays a force of description and dramatic completeness we have seldom seen surpassed. The interest of the narrative intensifies itself to the deepest pathos, and shakes the feelings. The closing scene, where the dying penitent, under the impulse of strong human affection, reveals herself to her lost husband and is at length forgiven, is in the highest degree tragic, and the whole management of the story exhibits unquestionable genius and originality."

One can imagine the pleasure with which the author read these first words of recognition. Their influence must have sweetened all the days of her stay abroad. The beauties of earth, the sparkling sea—that sea which to her was ever the greatest delight; the grandest and loveliest object in nature—the blue skies, the sunshine, the fields and

flowers, must have gained an additional charm as she began to dream of a day when she would be known and appreciated.

A dream long delayed. For my mother wrote *East Lynne* and really commenced her literary career at a time when many writers have begun to think of giving up work. Scott was forty-five when his first book was written, and my mother was more than forty-five when *East Lynne* appeared.

Other reviews followed quickly upon the *Daily News*.

"*East Lynne* is so interesting," said the *Saturday Review*, "that the interest begins with the beginning of the first volume and ends with the end of the third. The faults on which criticism fastens most naturally, are all, or almost all, avoided. It is not spun out. It is not affected, or vulgar, or silly. It is full of a variety of characters, all touched off with point, finish and felicity. It bears unmistakable signs of being written by a woman, but it has many more of the excellencies than of the weaknesses of women's writing."

In speaking of the *legal* portion of *East Lynne*, the *Saturday Review* remarked :

"What is more wonderful is that the legal proceedings taken when the murder is finally discovered are all, or almost all, right. There is a trial, with its preliminary proceedings, and a real summing up, and a lively cross-examination. Mrs. Wood has an accuracy and method of legal knowledge about her which would do credit to many famous male novelists."

I may here remark that her legal knowledge was really extensive and accurate. She had known several great lawyers intimately, and one of them used to say that her knowledge of law was quite equal to his. She took the keenest interest in all great trials. She followed out the threads and points of an intricate case with the greatest clearness and insight. In all important trials where mystery or complications were involved, or doubt and indecision as to right and wrong, guilty or not guilty, she quickly made up her mind at an early stage, saw the strong and the weak points, and was scarcely ever wrong in the opinion she formed. She often said that had she been a man, she would have made a first-rate lawyer, with a passionate love for her work.

The *Saturday Review* continued :

"The murder is not the main incident of the story. The chief place is reserved for the sorrows of an erring wife. . . . The method of dealing with this theme is entirely Mrs. Wood's own, and shows very remarkable and unusual skill. . . . Evidently such a plot affords much scope for fine drawing of character and for powerful and effective scenes. In every one of the three parts of the story, Mrs. Wood has been successful. She places before us a distinct picture of Lady Isabel as a young, ignorant, kind-hearted, charming girl, with a gentle spirit, although with ill-disciplined feelings and an utter want of worldly wisdom. In the second part, Lady Isabel is not made either too bad or too good. We cannot bring ourselves to condemn her very harshly, and yet the authoress never for a moment allows us to doubt of her abhorrence of such a crime. But the gem of this part is the character of Barbara Hare, who presents exactly the qualities which Lady Isabel wanted ; who has strong sense and

a right judgment, and an adoring love for her husband, very different from the gentle, flickering liking which Lady Isabel bestowed on the hero. The third part, however, must have been the most difficult to write, for it is all necessarily pathetic, and to sustain pathetic writing is a great tax on the powers of a story teller. Considering the very great difficulty of the task, the success is undeniable. Few persons could read with dry eyes the scenes that pass between the despairing mother and the little dying boy to whom she may not reveal her love. And an achievement quite as great is the contrast that is preserved between the characters of the two wives brought into daily contact under such singular circumstances. Mrs. Wood has quite avoided the fault of making Barbara too good. Although, at the close of the story, the whole of the attorney's affections are most properly concentrated on his living wife, the reader is not sorry to be permitted to have a slight preference for the dead one."

"*East Lynne*," said *The Observer*, "is so full of incident, so exciting in every page, and so admirably written, that one hardly knows how to go to bed without reading to the very last page. . . . The trial scene is well depicted. There are no inconsistencies of time and place to shock the intelligent reader, such as most novels are full of; and you rise from its perusal with satisfaction, feeling that the same events might reasonably have been expected to rise under similar circumstances."

"*East Lynne*," said the *Morning Post*, "is touching, well-intentioned, and written in the highest tone of morality and earnestness. It is a strong appeal to women by a woman, who would urge upon her fellows the invincible truth that only the ways of wisdom are those of pleasantness, and only her paths are those of peace. . . . Mrs. Wood has selected a difficult subject for a novelist whose aim is higher than that of merely providing amusement and producing excitement. To create compassion for the sinner and to avoid sympathy with the sin; to strip the abandonment of rectitude and the dereliction from principle of all their romance; to invest them with their harshest reality, and to enforce the lesson of the hopelessly inevitable punishment which is in, and by, and through the breach of the most sacred law of God and the most binding obligations of society; are responsible and onerous tasks which the writer of *East Lynne* has executed well and faithfully."

"Miss Cornelia Carlyle," said the *Press*, "is one of the most laughable elderly ladies in the whole realm of fiction."

"Nothing strikes the reader of *East Lynne* more than the extraordinary manner in which the mystery of each part of the plot is preserved," said the *Conservative*. "As the reader feels that he is moving in the different parts of the drama, and unconsciously feels himself deeply interested in its several characters, he almost trembles as each dangerous turning-point of the story is passed. *East Lynne*, we may truly say, is no ordinary novel. A high tone of morality, a remarkable discrimination of human character, and a keen perception of the manners and customs of the age, are marks by which it is especially distinguished, and form some clue to solve the mystery of its warm and greedy reception at the hands of the reading public. . . . Mrs. Henry Wood has served the interests of morality in holding up to society a mirror in which it may see itself exactly reflected. She probes deep, and does not, through any false prudery, gloss over its evils and only depict its brightest colours. The healthy sentiment and pure morality of Mrs. Henry Wood's work renders it

particularly valuable at the present time. Now, when it is fashionable to live fast and loose; now, when those who take the lead in the most select circles do not frown down, but rather encourage, those little excesses which a former generation might gravely term sins; now, when the sanctities of domestic life are threatened, and associations hallowed by time are endangered; it is a matter of no small importance that the follies, the inanities, the vices of society should be so ably portrayed and so thrillingly denounced as we see them in *East Lynne*."

These are a few extracts out of a few of the many reviews that appeared at the time, almost every one of them written in the same spirit of appreciation. I will only give one more, an extract from the *Times*. It was one of the last to appear, but its effect was more powerful than the joint influence of all the others.

"In *East Lynne*," remarked the *Times*, "we admit the authoress to have achieved a considerable success, which has brought her into the very foremost rank of her class. The authoress," it went on to say in the course of its very long review, "is really what the novelist now prefers to call himself—a moralist; and there is moral purpose in her portraits as well as vivacity. There is great breadth and clearness in her delineations of character, and her range is extensive, including many types. There is one point on which we may speak with special emphasis, and that is her capacity to portray *men*, an accomplishment so rare on the part of *lady* novelists that we do not at this moment recall any one who has exhibited it in equal degree. The two characters of Mr. Carlyle and the second Lord Mount Severn are the principal examples of this rare capacity. Mount Severn is indicated with very few touches, and yet we have a portrait worthy the best of his class, like the faces which look upon us from the canvas of Vandyke. Carlyle's is a more elaborated performance, and its harmony is preserved, in spite of its elaboration and of the many trying tests to which it is put in the progress of the story. His character is consistent with the serious pre-occupations which render him so unobservant of the love of Barbara on the one hand, and on the other of the jealousy and suffering of his wife. He errs, but it is the error of a manly nature assailed by difficulties which a more frivolous person would have anticipated. But in dealing with his difficulties, when they do come, his conduct is admirable. It is rarely that we find a hero so consistently heroic, so sensible and just, and yet so lovable. There is a strength in his character, as presented to the reader, which makes him forget the balance of qualities required for its conception on the part of the author. Let us add that it is not only a masterly portrait, but a conception of which even a moralist may be proud: a brave, noble and truthful gentleman, without the pretence of being a paragon for the humiliation of his species.

On the other hand, if we take the circle of characters in which authoresses generally most excel, we shall find the authoress here is equally skilful: that is to say, in analysing the motives and emotions of her own sex. She presents us to a little group of interesting women, each well-defined and judiciously contrasted in their relations to the story, its course and conclusion. Miss Corny is remarkably good, and so is Barbara Hare. So also are Afy Hallijohn and her sister Joyce. Isabel is less marked; but then she is the instrument on which the pathos of the story is strung, she is tossed hither and thither, and is but a frail reed for such a weight of woe and misadventure. The reader cannot fail to take an interest in her fate, nor to be satisfied with the de-

meanour of her husband on her death-bed. The feelings of the latter are just indicated to the point to which analysis may fairly go, and then the authoress retires with a wise and decorous reticence. Balzac would have gone further, and would have handled and squeezed each throbbing heartstring, as his manner was in making his morbid preparations. But our authoress has better taste and a chaster purpose; nor does she effect to fathom the very gulf of human frailty. In short, she evinces the tact of a gentlewoman even in the passages where less equable and chastened temperaments have a natural tendency to literary hysterics. The death-bed of Lady Isabel's child is an example of this self-command, where the child is represented as asking a child's questions under circumstances where others would have made him a precocious angel, and where the announcement is also made to the mother in her agony that her secret is known to the faithful Joyce."

The *Times* then proceeded to give a long extract from the work, concluding with the words:

"We have no occasion to say more on behalf of a story from which we are able to quote such a passage as the above. *East Lynne* is a first rate novel."

The passage alluded to is the death-bed scene between Willie Carlyle and his mother, and the recognition of Lady Isabel by Joyce.

XI.

AND so *East Lynne* became not only the great success of the season, but one of the successes of the century.

No one accepted it so calmly and quietly as the author herself; no one could have worn her laurels more modestly. To say that she was not gratified by all the praise and recognition she received would be to make her more than human. Genius is ever sensitive, and the slightest unsympathetic touch will cause it to shrink within itself with a pain those less gifted natures who inflict it cannot possibly realise.

For this reason, my mother soon discovered that to read reviews, whether favourable or unfavourable, was an unsatisfactory experience that bore no good fruit; and in a very short time she never had them brought under her notice and never even knew when they appeared.

The only exception she made was in the case of the first series of *Johnny Ludlow*. The book appeared anonymously. The whole press was full of praise for this unknown writer, and she much enjoyed reading about herself from, as it were, an outside point of view.

And it may be remarked that in *Johnny Ludlow*, Mrs. Henry Wood achieved what so many had attempted and so few realised—a second and distinct reputation. It has been said that life is too short to make this possible, and it is certain that it has seldom been accomplished.

When my mother was on what proved to be her death-bed, though we knew it not, she told me one evening that for many years she had had it in her mind to write a series of stories after the fashion of *Johnny Ludlow*, but to make them the experiences of a governess.

"I am certain that they would have been very popular," she said. "But," she added sadly, "I shall never write them now. It is all over."

They were exactly the sort of papers that she would have done so well ; revealing intimate interiors of English homes ; the dramas and tragedies, mysteries and complications that life itself is so full of, and that her imagination seemed able to create without end and with the greatest ease. No doubt their popularity would have equalled, or almost equalled, that of *Johnny Ludlow*.

Mrs. Henry Wood possessed the very rare gift of excelling equally in long or short stories. The two powers are not often combined. I do not say that a novelist will not succeed in writing a few good short tales besides his longer works ; but my mother, in addition to between thirty and forty long novels, must have written not less than from four to five hundred short stories, every one of them possessing a distinct plot carefully thought out.

Her powers of work and her imagination were, indeed, almost miraculous, and led one to believe in the Vicar's remark, that there is such a thing as secular inspiration. It is impossible for the reader to realise the amount of mere manual labour that her work from first to last entailed upon her. And all accomplished by a fragile form, absolutely devoid of all physical and muscular power, tender and sensitive and delicate as a lily, and to be as carefully tended. A small child had greater strength than she, and could easily have mastered her.

And all this done by one living a quiet life, much in the retirement of her study : leaving those about her to take their part in the world, and hearing much of the world and of friends through their experience. Before *East Lynne* appeared, my mother had mixed much with the world and gone much into society abroad ; but when she seriously entered upon a literary career, she felt it would be impossible to do much work and also to satisfy the claims of the world ; and to a very great extent she gave up the latter, confining herself chiefly to the pleasure of receiving her friends at home.

XII.

East Lynne was not destined to enjoy a mere passing popularity. It has been out more than a quarter of a century, and it is even more popular to-day than when it first appeared, and the demand is ever increasing. It has already been stated that an edition is never less than ten thousand copies, and that in most years a reprint is required. It has been translated into every known tongue—even into Parsee and Hindustanee ; and the readers will gather a large circle of Hindoos around them and read *East Lynne* to them in their own tongue, and they will rock themselves to and fro and laugh and sob by turns.

A short time ago, the chief Spanish bookseller in Madrid wrote to my mother through Messrs. Bentley and Son, and said that the most

popular book on his shelves, original or translated, was *East Lynne*. His only motive for writing, he added, was that he thought it would please the author to know this.

Not very long ago it was translated into Welsh, and brought out in a Welsh newspaper.

It has been dramatised and played countless times. Sometimes it has appeared on the same night at three different London theatres. It is always being played in the provinces throughout Great Britain. A short time ago, in one of the large Scotch towns, it was being advertised by means of a balloon, which, high in the air, announced that *East Lynne* was being performed at the Royal Theatre.

In America, for many years it has been the most popular of their plays, just as *East Lynne*, the work, has been the most popular of their books, and has sold very far over a million copies. In the English Colonies, the sale of Mrs. Henry Wood's works increases steadily year by year, and there, of all writers present or past, she is said to be the most popular.

In France, the story has been dramatised, and is constantly being played in Paris and the provinces. Mr. North-Peat translated the work into French; and only a few days ago, in a letter received from his widow, Mrs. North-Peat tells me that when it was appearing in *La Patrie*, night after night the sellers of the newspaper went up and down the boulevards shouting out, *La Patrie: Suite de Lady Isabel!* a distinction by way of announcement never accorded to any other work. So great was its popularity as a translation.

Lady Isabel was the title given to the French translation, as *East Lynne* was thought too English to gain favour with a people who are not celebrated for their skill in pronouncing any language but their own.

It has recently been translated a second time; and now appears also under the singular title of *Le Château Tragique*.

"I think *East Lynne* almost the most interesting book I ever read," said Lord Lyttelton to a mutual friend. "And I consider the chapter headed *Alone for Evermore* one of the finest and most pathetic chapters in the whole realm of English Fiction."

This, from one who was admitted to be one of the cleverest men in England, who had taken honours at Cambridge and been bracketed with Dean Vaughan, was no slight praise.

"I am amazed at the power and interest of *East Lynne*," wrote Harriet Martineau to another friend. "I do not care how many murders or other crimes form the foundations of plots, if they are to give us such stories as this. I wish I possessed a hundredth part of the author's imagination."

She wrote much to the same effect of *Verner's Pride*, a work which found very great favour with her.

And when you came to the author of all this work and labour, you found her the quietest and gentlest, loveliest and most modest of women, so fragile and delicate that this alone caused one to treat her with unconscious reverence and veneration. A loud tone would immediately become hushed and subdued in her presence. Her face, it is true, sparkled with intellect, which, at a first glance, lifted her out of comparison with others; for it was as exceptional as her talent, as singular as her perfect nature. Success never made the slightest change in her, except that as the years went on, she grew, if possible, more modest, more lovely, lovable and gentle. Yet hers was a tangible success as well as an intellectual, for her income resulting from her brain work for many of the later years of her life amounted to between five and six thousand a-year.

But, in her own words, it is all over now. After so much toil has come rest. Man goeth forth until the evening. Happy they who have had such a day and such an evening as hers. Everything that is lovely and chaste, everything that is gentle and graceful, reminds us of her. The sweetest chime ever heard, the softest silver bell ever cast, could never have equalled the clear and liquid tones of her matchless voice. The stars shining down night after night from the dark blue heavens, with their steadfast light, are not more pure and beautiful than was she. To gaze at them in their far away infinite repose brings some peace to the soul. Between them and earth there ever comes to us the image of her perfect face and spirit. But oh, this mystery of life, this silence of death, this necessity for separation!

Who can tell whither our BELOVED go? Are they near us or afar off? Hovering about our right hand, guarding our footsteps, or yet further than the stars, at whose very distance we shudder and recoil? Are they far away in that Heaven of Heavens, reserved for the spirits of the just made perfect?

I know not. But this I know. Where every spirit may be that is beautiful and holy, there she has entered, though her influence remains and her presence seems ever near. Nothing delighted her more than Martin's *Plains of Heaven*, it was so like the realms that ever haunted her dreams: and there, where flows the pure water of the River of Life, her spirit has taken its flight. And there she must be sought for, and will be found again by those to whom in life she was most precious and most priceless, and for whom her great heart ever beat with the pulses of the most intense though silent thought and affection.

I have been asked to say a few words about *Fohnny Ludlow*, with which stories this magazine is so intimately associated. I scarcely know if this will be possible. The effort to write these papers has indeed been a bitter-sweet, but almost too great a strain. If it is to be done, it must be in a short and concluding notice, and perhaps after somewhat more than a month's interval.

CHARLES W. WOOD.

WOULD WE RETURN AGAIN?

IF, o'er the silent river of sweet rest
 We had outsailed all earthly woe;
 If, from the shriven soul within our breast
 The countless sins of long ago
 Had all been blotted out by God's own Hand;
 If then with choruses sublime
 There gladly hailed us from the shining strand
 The souls of bygone time—

Would we return again?

If we, though having reached the rest which waits
 Brave hearts, all weary and footsore,
 Got glimpses from the open jasper gates
 Of those sweet souls we loved of yore,
 And who were walking now in ways of sin
 With tired feet, bleeding and unshod:
 With eager hope that we might lead them in
 Across the golden hills of God—

Would we return again?

It love no longer held our heart in thrall,
 If we had waked from out its dream;
 If of life's cup our lips had drained the gall,
 And joy had passed from grove and stream;
 If then, from out the gloom of buried years,
 A voice came o'er the lone, hushed land;
 And if, amidst deep penitential tears,
 One reached to us a tender hand—

Would we return again?

If we had passed the gates of easeful death,
 And left behind all woe and moan,
 Would we resume again our mortal breath,
 And tread our way back all alone?
 Would it be well that what high wisdom brought
 Should from our soul again be riven,
 With many a shining, pure, celestial thought
 Within our waning dream of heaven?—

Would we return again?

If, mingling with the shining seraph throng,
 Cleaving our way from star to star,
 We heard, mid cymbal, dulcimer and song,
 One lonesome, deep wail from afar;
 A cry from out a heart that only we
 Could fill, as in the days gone by;
 Would we drop down from such high ecstasy,
 Our soul unshadowed with a sigh?—

Would we return again?

Oh, weary world of care and stings and scorn,
 Oh, kindly, sweet rest-giving grave,
 We would not leave again the Better Morn,
 Nor swim Death's stream of cold, dark wave!
 Safe haven for the spirit tossed so long,
 Eternal home which quenchless love has brought,
 Save longing that our loved might join our song,
 Our souls on sombre wings of earthly thought,
 Would ne'er return again!

ALEXANDER LAMONT.

A WARWICKSHIRE ROMEO.

A Tale in Three Chapters.

BY J. C. AYRTON.

CHAPTER I.

CAPULET AND MONTAGUE.

IN a certain old red house in the main street of Warwick lived, nearly sixty years ago, my heroine, Alice Barton, under the care of her grandfather: a fine old irascible Tory gentleman, red-faced, white-haired and opinionated, who had fallen upon days evil enough to embitter a nature originally sound at the core, but easily warped and strained by prejudice.

Pretty Alice, an orphan without brother or sister, was the very apple of the old man's eye: and she had never felt the want of youthful companionship, for she had always had a nearer and dearer associate than even a paternal one in Frank Chillingworth, the only son of a rich grazier at Whitnash. His schooldays were passed in Warwick, and his holidays were mostly spent there also—in Mr. Barton's green, high-walled garden: or sitting with Alice in the winter time in the red wainscoted parlour on the cushioned seats which ran along the deep bay windows, from which the young people were never tired of watching the familiar stir and hum of well-known figures and equipages passing in the street below.

Mr. Chillingworth chuckled rather than grumbled at his son's absorption. He loved the bright girl for her own sake; and she was said to be the richest heiress in the Midlands: for Mr. Barton was head of an old-established County Bank.

The young people were well matched. Frank was ruddy, broad-shouldered and middle sized, with keen, blue, far-sighted eyes: a true son of the rich soil which had nurtured the Chillingworths for more generations than the Bartons had been magnates in Warwick. Alice was little and fair, with an oval face, creamy-white skin, grey eyes, and hair that would curl in flowing ringlets in strong contrast to the odious fashion prevalent in '29.

The Chillingworths and Bartons were bound by the ties of long ancestral friendship, inherited by the fathers of our pair.

But of late years, the stress of politics had tended to divide them. It was a time of violent and bitter party feeling. Men were gradually drawn by natural bias or external pressure to lengths which their more sober judgment would once have deprecated most hotly. Mr. Barton grew stiffer and stiffer in his Tory proclivities as the Reform

struggle began to be heralded by universal agitation. Mr. Chillingworth joined a Fox Club, and developed a Liberal leaning into strong Liberal tenets.

Their religious views also grew to differ in an immense ratio. Mr. Chillingworth, jolly and unreflective, remained an orthodox member of the high and dry church party of his youth. Mr. Barton, naturally inclined to look on everything with a darker and more morose eye, became gradually infected by the growing Evangelicalism: and at last left his parish church to be a seat-holder in a missionary chapel set up by a star of the Clapham School to enlighten the eyes of the Midlanders.

Thither Alice was taken every Sunday, and her distaste to the dull service and long sermons was not lessened by the fact that Frank stuck sturdily to the high green-baize pew in his father's church. For Alice was neither politically nor theologically inclined. Country girls in that day mostly left it to their male relations to decide their views of such matters.

In 1829, the question of Catholic emancipation came to finish the alienation of the two old friends. Mr. Barton went home one night from a True Blue dinner to tell Alice that her engagement must be broken off. Frank had been seconding his father at a public meeting in the afternoon in favour of a resolution for removing all religious disabilities. "Not a penny of my money shall go to enrich the fields of a latitudinarian who abhors religious reform and yet would bring on Revolution!"

Alice listened, but said nothing. The old gentleman, she saw, had at least one bottle of port under his belt. She trusted the morning would bring moderation in its train.

Alas, it only brought increased determination. Neither entreaty nor argument could bring him to alter his decision: the only concession he would make was that she might see Frank herself once more, to communicate her grandfather's decision. She wrote a letter to her lover, which was blistered with the tears she proudly choked back before Mr. Barton.

Frank came even before she thought it possible the messenger could have reached him. He was more angry than alarmed. The sight of her bright little face all tear-stained made him furious.

"I have never seen you cry, Alice!" he said, "even when you were a baby: and I have often thought you should never have cause to wet your cheek with one single drop of bitterness."

"I never have had anything to cry for before this. Now I think I shall never have reason to do anything else."

"But you don't mean to say you have ever thought of giving me up?"

"What can I do, Frank?"

"Marry me in despite of the old gentleman."

"Oh, Frank!" Beyond this ejaculation Alice was silent, struck

dumb with horror. Frank reined in his impatience wonderfully, got his arm round her, and began to argue the point. She listened with attention, but at first would only shake her head wearily.

"It is forced upon us: the blame would be Mr. Barton's. No one could think less well of you," reiterated Frank in varying formula.

At last Alice was compelled to answer. "Even if anything could ever make me do a thing I have always thought of as shocking, I would never come to your house to be a burden on your father."

"A burden!" Frank laughed with reassuring scorn. "My father told me to tell you what I didn't dare to repeat till you force me to it, Alice, by talking such nonsense, that he would rather you came to us as Griseldis did to her husband than that we should lose you."

The old man had used Chaucerian English, and Frank got very red in the telling; even thus qualified. But Alice's colour did not change. Female education was not very far advanced fifty years ago.

"I don't know who she was, Frank: but your father is always good and kind."

"He says we want a mistress for the house, not a fortune: we have money enough. Alice, will you come to Gretna Green with me? There would be dangerous delays any other way. Remember, it lies between running away with me and giving me up. Hush, dear! listen! you know you would be safe in my hands: and we would be married in church directly we came back."

But Alice shrank with horror, which had even a little indignation, from the bare thought of an elopement. Frank had to leave her, sobbing as if her heart would break, and saying over and over again that she would never give him up, but that she could never, never do such a thing as he proposed. He managed to swallow the expression of his wrath in very pity for her agony of distress and shame, trusting to time to work in his behalf.

CHAPTER II.

THE NURSE'S GOOD OFFICES.

TIME passed on, and Mr. Barton continued inexorable. Alice began to sicken for the sight of Frank, who kept out of her way for a while, hurt and indignant.

But as summer waxed towards autumn, she met him several times, by chance as she thought, in an old trysting place of theirs, at a stile in the fields leading to Grey's Cliff. It seemed as if the feet of both had led them unwittingly to the beloved spot: for Alice was shy and wretched, Frank silent and constrained, and they exchanged but few words.

But at last he broke down, and re-urged his suit in passionate, eager

words. He had been to Mr. Barton, he said, and had bowed his pride so far as to entreat him that he would not wreck the happiness of two young lives for his whim ; but he had desired him to leave the office. A few weeks after, thinking time might have brought misgivings, Mr. Chillingworth had written him a letter to the same effect, which had been returned. The very day before that on which he now met Alice, Frank had attempted to address Mr. Barton in the High Street ; and he had turned on his heel in insulting silence, in presence of many observers.

“ You will not think it necessary to mince matters with a man who treats your lover like this, Alice ? ”

Distressed and perplexed beyond measure, she begged for time to think, and promised to meet Frank and give him her answer the next evening at the same place.

A country town is proverbially the head-quarters of gossip. The affairs of the Barton and Chillingworth families had excited lively interest for miles round Warwick. People took sides according to their religious or political bias, and some base partisan of the Barton faction brought to her grandfather's ears this very evening the news that Frank and Alice had met. Enraged at her disobedience, he threatened to send her to an aunt in Ireland if she ever spoke to her lover again. The sentence conveyed the idea of perpetual banishment to a Midland girl sixty years ago.

The harshness was ill-timed. She had inherited a piece of the old man's obstinacy ; she was silent, but stung into rebellion. She wrote to Frank that night, saying that she would do all he had asked her, and dispatched it by the housekeeper, who had been her nurse and was devoted to her. By the same messenger, Frank sent back a detailed plan of flight, which it would almost seem he must have contemplated for some time, so perfect were the details.

The next evening was one of Mr. Barton's nights for attending a whist club and supper, held bi-weekly at the leading Tory hotel. Alice was to meet her lover at dusk upon the Castle bridge, when they would thus gain at least five hours' clear start, and would make at once straight towards the great northern road, so as to be at Gretna as soon as horses' legs could carry them there.

“ My father sends his love,” wrote Frank in a hasty note sent to thank and encourage Alice. “ If he were not fifteen stone of dead weight, he would make one in the carriage. He looks upon our scheme as a splendid practical joke. I feel all the responsibility of undertaking my darling Alice's happiness. Be sure you shall never have cause to do otherwise than thank Heaven you found courage to trust to your fond lover, Frank.”

Young Chillingworth, as an open-handed youngster and the boldest rider to hounds in the Midlands, was the darling of the horsey interest round Warwick. He knew where to go for the best cattle and the coolest postillions, and could count on secrecy. As dusk fell, he was

waiting for Alice on the bridge which commands the view of Warwick Castle proudly overlooking the Avon. After a few minutes of suspense, a little cloaked and hooded figure, carrying a bag, was seen approaching from the town. Frank flew to meet it.

"Frank," said Alice, raising a pale face to his flushed one, "will you never think little of me in your heart for what I am doing this night?"

"My darling, my whole life will be devoted to showing you how I thank you!"

He handed her into the carriage standing near with the reverence a man pays to a princess, wrapped her up hastily but warmly, for the nights were beginning to be chilly, and then took his own seat on the box. The horses, with difficulty held in hand for the brief interval of waiting, dashed off, striking fire from the flints with their eager heels.

They had to gain the northern road by a circuitous route. It was all new to Alice, who had scarcely ever been out of Warwick; but in after days, she could recall few clear recollections of their flight. It seemed to have been a hurried, swiftly-shifting panorama. Half waking, half asleep, she saw the country rush darkly by her as they whirled through slumbering villages and rattled over the stones of busy towns, locked in the silence and deep sleep of night. She saw the sun rise in the chill dawn and set in blood-red clouds, and still they went on and on. The vision of her grandfather in hot pursuit of her, and snatching her ultimately from Frank, haunted her waking hours and troubled her fitful dreams when she could close her eyes.

They halted as seldom as they could, and at the least frequented posting-houses.

At every stage, Frank got down and came to talk to her and cheer her, resuming his seat without, despite cold or rain, directly the horses were put in. He did not seem to want sleep; he was a strong and hearty young fellow, and was strung up to a pitch of nervous excitement. At first he could hardly conceal his anxiety; but as time lengthened, and they got well on in the familiar northern road, with fresh fine horses available at every change, he grew lighter hearted. Every posting-house seemed to mark a stage nearer to triumph and Alice. But at an inn some way past York, he came to her with a face full of a new fear he could not succeed in suppressing.

"Oh! what is it?" cried Alice, as he tried to meet her eyes with the accustomed jest and smile. "Are we pursued?"

He tried to rally her out of the fancy that anything was wrong, but Alice would not be put off.

"Do I not know your face well enough by this time to see when anything is the matter. Tell me the truth, Frank!" she cried.

"The postillion says that at the last inn a mounted messenger rode into the yard before we reached it, to order a relay of horses to be in waiting for a gentleman who was pursuing a runaway couple."

Alice turned as white as death. "I knew he would move heaven and earth to overtake us and snatch me from you."

"We will not despond," cried Frank as the horses came out, their coats shining like satin in the morning sun, now high above the horizon. He helped to harness them with all speed, and they sprang forward, flying as it seemed, yet all too slow for the alarmed lovers whose fate depended upon their haste. Straining up hill, then rattling downwards, then stretching at the gallop across a reach of open moorland country, the northern hills purpling the distance. Frank looked back for the hundredth time towards noon, and saw to his horror that a distant speck dotted the white winding road, which loomed more and more distinctly on his vision, urge the pace how he might.

"We are pursued, sir!" said the postillion, looking behind at last.

"I know it!" said Frank, grinding his teeth. "And there is no shelter for miles."

The horses did their very best; the postillion plied the whip and the spur till Frank told him to desist. The sound of advancing wheels at last began to invade the stillness of the September afternoon: it caught Alice's ears: she stretched her head out of the window and cried to Frank in a voice of agony.

"He has caught us, Frank! What can we do?"

"Got a pistol, sir?" asked the postillion, turning round.

"Yes; why?"

"Shoot their leader."

"I couldn't do it to save her life!" said Frank.

"Then it's all up with us: we can do no more," said the man, a little contemptuously, as he regarded his struggling team, almost dead beat. By this time, Mr. Barton was audibly vociferating to them to stop, in a voice hoarse with passion. "If you don't, I will put a bullet through some of you," he yelled.

CHAPTER III.

LOVE LAUGHS AT BOLTS.

ALICE was not missed for some hours after her departure: no one but the housekeeper knew she was out, and as it was her duty to wait upon the parlour, no one else would see her till bedtime. But when the locking-up hour arrived, it became evident that the young mistress was absent, and the under-servants became excited. Mr. Barton arriving at home about midnight, found the house ablaze with light, and the maids in great apparent agitation. Pamela, the pretty housemaid, who had a fellow feeling for lovers in distress, met her master in the hall.

"Oh! sir! Miss Alice has gone and done herself a mischief!" the girl cried, amid her sobs. Mrs. Dixon, the housekeeper, kept dis-

creetly in the background, wringing her hands in dumb manifestation of woe.

Happily for them, he did not wait, but ran upstairs to Alice's room. It was all neat and orderly, but no letter or clue was discernable.

"They must have gone to Gretna ! But I will tear her from him !"

Beside himself with passion, he ran to the nearest posting-house and ordered horses, sending on at once a mounted messenger to the next stage, with orders to have relays ready in advance all the way to Scotland. As he followed in the track of the lovers, his fury grew instead of lessening, for he imagined them successful and himself foiled. But he found at last, with a savage triumph which redoubled his efforts, that he was gaining ground upon the fugitives, who in due time fell into his clutches.

Frank's postillion pulled up his team in obedience to the pursuer's reiterated threats : and the disappointed lover had to stand by while old Barton, with no gentle hand, dragged Alice from her place in the first coach and put her into his own. She uttered no word : but she turned her eyes with a heartbroken expression upon Frank, who was white and silent, but wore a look of stern determination.

"Outwitted !" cried John Barton as he took his seat beside his granddaughter. "If I were a younger man, you should not escape with whole bones, sir."

Never a word spoke Frank, but a gleam shot from his bright blue eye. The coach turned southwards.

"Drive on, my man !" cried old Barton. "You needn't hurry the cattle this way : we can take our time going back."

A crack of the whip, and the jaded steeds began to retrace their steps with downcast heads. Meanwhile Frank was regarding the team in his own coach with critical eyes. Having selected the likeliest, he unyoked and mounted it, and sat a few minutes watching the vehicle which had snatched his prize from him in the moment of success, as it disappeared slowly in the distance. When it had almost vanished to a dim speck, he started in its wake, leaving his own postillion to follow him leisurely. At the next stage on the way homewards, he changed his weary horse for a fresh one, and resumed his pursuit of the returning travellers, taking care to leave a sufficient interval between himself and them to preclude the possibility of old Barton's hearing of his tactics.

Meanwhile Alice, seated opposite her stern and triumphant captor, was having a very bad time of it. He said but little, yet that little was more than enough : he had made up his mind to take her over to Ireland at once.

"And your aunt is a sharp woman ; you won't find it easy to hoodwink her and keep up your correspondence with young fellows !" he wound up.

Worn out, trembling and ashamed, Alice felt only a burning desire to hide herself from unkindly eyes : she attempted no reply.

Mr. Barton had not closed his eyes during the journey north. Now that the strain was removed and the prize safely within his grasp, nature began at last to assert herself, and to Alice's intense relief, he dozed until they reached York, near midnight. Here the prospect of comfortable beds and a good supper was dangled before his eyes by the rubicund landlord of the posting-house, who came out bowing and smirking to suggest rest and refreshment. The bait took. Accustomed to the pleasures of the table, Mr. Barton made a hearty meal and washed it down with more than one bumper of the best wine the inn afforded. After that, his weariness becoming intolerable, he gave an order to postpone the journey till the next morning, and desired that his niece and himself should be shown to their rooms.

But his vigilance did not relax. He took the precaution of locking Alice in her chamber and removing the key. The tired girl was too sad and crushed to remonstrate, though keenly indignant; but she could not sleep, weary as she was: she paced her room, wringing her hands and crying bitterly. It was all over now. She had disgraced herself for ever to no purpose. The shame of being baffled mingled with the agony of disappointment. The scheme entered into with such shrinking of heart had miscarried disgracefully; she could never face familiar eyes again. But then banishment entailed the loss of Frank; and all this in the very hour, as it seemed, of victory. She flung herself into a seat and hid her burning, tear-stained face.

After a few moments, a low tapping at her chamber window startled her. She sprang up, terrified.

"Hush! It is I, Frank, Alice!" said a low voice she knew. "Do not be frightened. Of course I am not coming in."

She ran to the window, which the chambermaid had left wide open under its thick old-fashioned curtains. There, mounted on a ladder, stood Frank, his face on a level with hers. You need not ask if their lips met.

"I knew the old man must give in, some time. I have got everything ready," persevered Frank, still in the same hurried, low tones. "Your grandfather is asleep. The chambermaid has shut the shutters outside his window, so that he will think it is dark when he awakes, no matter how late it is! We have hours before us, Alice, and we won't be caught this time! Come with me at once, darling."

"I can't! I daren't! Oh, Frank, I am so ashamed, so wretched!" cried Alice, her head drooping on his breast. He put his arm about her, which was always his manner of commencing an argument. And it is a good one—always given like circumstances. It holds the listener, and predisposes in a mesmeric manner to consideration of the question.

"What! you will go to Ireland? you will leave me for ever? Not but that I would find you out and follow you, if you were at the

other end of the world ! But this worry and wear and tear is killing you, Alice : and it is as well to end it sooner as later. Don't think of yourself : think of me. You can get lots of lovers in Ireland : I am told they are a most susceptible people where female attractions are concerned. But how could *I* ever marry any other woman after having been your lover, Alice ? ”

“ I think there is blarney enough over here without going to Ireland for it,” said Alice, laughing in the midst of her tears.

“ Alice, the carriage is in waiting : we have hours before us. I can never go back to Warwick to be the laughing-stock of the country side. There is no danger. Your uncle will never be able to catch us up ; we are too near the border, and we shall have too great a start of him for that. Before he is up, you will be my wife, and safe. No man on earth will have power to part us then ! ”

Half yielding, half resisting, Alice submitted to be lifted on to the ladder, and carried down it.

It was high morn next day before Mr. Barton awoke to the full consciousness of the double trick that had been played on him. The night seemed so long that at last he struck a match and looked at his watch. The landlord, really innocent, the chambermaid, as really an accomplice of the lovers, professed entire ignorance and the deepest sympathy. But Mr. Barton knew it would only be injurious to his dignity to pursue a couple who had twelve hours' start of him, for so short a distance : and unwilling to brave the derision of the Warwickshire people, he started on a tour of some weeks' duration.

Meanwhile Frank and Alice had returned home from Gretna as fast as horses' feet could carry them, and were married at St. Mary's by special licence immediately upon their reappearance : Mr. Chillingworth giving away the bride.

Mr. Barton made a great talk about having revised his will. But Alice professed herself quite regardless of his money, and soon after the birth of her first son she went to tell the old man that he was to be called after him, and invited him to stand sponsor at the christening.

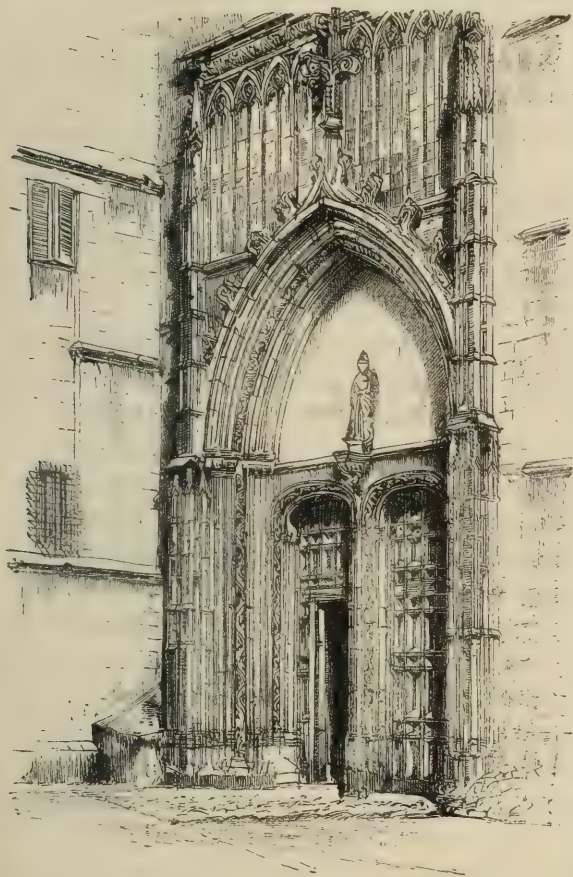
Mr. Barton was beginning to feel very lonely, and accepted the olive branch. When he died, some years after, it was found that if he had ever destroyed any will, he had never made another, and Alice inherited, as only relation, all that he had to leave.



LETTERS FROM MAJORCA.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "THROUGH HOLLAND,"
"UNDER NORTHERN SKIES," ETC., ETC.

Palma, Nov., 1886.



NORTH DOORWAY OF CATHEDRAL, PALMA.

MY DEAR E.—I think we must call this a Pastoral letter. Bishops, you know, deliver Pastorals to their clerical flock, who are no doubt duly grateful. And although I am not a Bishop and you are not a flock, either within or without the Pale, I think for once we may venture to tread in the excellent footsteps of these Lights of the Church. Whether you will be grateful for your Pastoral, is more than uncertain.

It can only be the record of a simple day spent in absolute quietness and without startling incident. Essentially a pastoral day. Your interest therein must be measured by the degree of failure or success with which I may place before

you the beauties of nature. Certainly at Miramar they are transcendent.

When I finished my letter last night, I was not able to tell you of this day spent at Miramar. We both agreed it was one to be remembered.

And yet I can scarcely tell you why it had this effect upon us. I have said that it was not signalled by great events or striking episodes. Herein, perhaps, lay part of its attraction. It delighted by its simplicity.

To begin with, we had it all to ourselves.

This wealth and beauty of nature ; this far-stretching, ever-sounding sea ; these cultivated slopes, rich with olive and almond trees,

vines and fig trees; these towering hills, wooded and watching; this rarified, intoxicating air and brilliant sunshine—all was ours, richly to revel in. No one interfered with our solitude. And what can give greater delight than a solitude of two, where all is harmony? I am persuaded that we shall enjoy no visit on the island so much as this to Miramar.

I described our arrival on Saturday night: how quickly depression gave place to an opposite condition, and I passed from *Il Penseroso* to *L'Allegro*. It is a weakness of my mortal nature. One moment you might charitably accord me a *De Profundis*: the next, find me, like St. Cecilia, ready to draw an angel down. But we all have moral as well as physical infirmities. Would our consciences had no heavier burdens to carry.

I have related what took place yesterday morning when we awoke to new weather and a new world. How, on throwing wide the shutters, behold everything was fair and goodly, and we felt in Paradise.

H. C. looked up his ream of foolscap, but something withheld him, and he did not attempt to compose. We went through the necessary process of dressing, losing no end of time at the windows, revelling in this wonderful scene. Long before we were ready to go down, the old woman called up something from below, with that voice, which as I have already told you, would penetrate from the grand doorway of St. Peter's to its extreme end. We could not understand her, but afterwards guessed her meaning.

She had already appeared upon the scene with hot water and beautifully polished boots, just as if we had been in the most civilised inn in the world. She was quite motherly, too, and did not in the least mind the airy costume in which she surprised us. We felt that it would be wasted modesty on our part to mind also. H. C., it is true, thought it a loss of dignity, and a white apparition disappeared round the doorway into the next room: but when I informed the apparition that no breakfast was to be had, it quickly reasserted itself with emphasis and argument.

Many a true word is spoken in jest, and so it proved on this occasion.

Presently the old woman again called up the staircase, and we wondered what she had to say. Before this there had been a great row going on below; the sort of noise that had astonished and alarmed us last night. But we no longer feared the consequences; no longer dreaded dead corpses and bowie knives, and a general whirlwind of murders.

A few moments later and we beheld an interesting calvacade in the road.

The old man was seated on a mule, dressed in his Sunday's best: a picturesque costume, which seemed, like Joseph's coat, of many colours. Impossible to have known him for the old man who had

sat shaving at the table, making grimaces hideous enough to bring one to the verge of idiocy. He was now quite dignified and imposing, and the animal that bore him evidently felt its honour and responsibility; looked grave as a judge and almost as wise.

The whole family followed the mule, also in their best. The old woman, her daughter and granddaughter, the daughter's husband, the two neighbours who had come in last night for a chat and helped to hold the kettle as we sat round the charcoal fire.

It was a picturesque cavalcade, in strange harmony with the surrounding scenery. Hills and slopes seemed to have been made especially for it, and vice versa. Had the old man stood there long enough to be sketched, I might have sent you a charming view. You would not have lost your heart to him, but would have been delighted with the general effect: the tout-ensemble of this Miramar-Mallorcan, Sunday-going procession.

Both he, however, and his quadruped were impatient to be off: and each occasionally looked round to see what caused the delay. The old woman was giving us last and incomprehensible directions: immediately after which the door was slammed, and peace reigned in the house. A solemn silence, the more mysterious and appalling for the late commotion.

The cavalcade started and threw us nods and becks and wreathed smiles. The old woman nearly shook her head off, a semaphore language evidently meant to emphasize her final directions. The younger woman's glances were more captivating. Of course they were all meant for H. C. She kissed her hand also, but this was to a favourite cat that had been shut out of the Hospiteria, and sat blinking its eyes in the doorway. H. C., however, took it to himself, and blushed with delight. He is very vain. The husband, however, seemed jealous of the cat—or of H. C.—and took his wife to task. Some people, you know, are jealous of anything, whilst others will be jealous even of nothing. The madness of the green-eyed monster afflicts them and makes the food it feeds upon.

I don't know that he was so very much to blame, either, for the young woman was comely, and possibly susceptible. I always noticed that whenever H. C. was in the way, she was not very far off. No doubt she was slightly under the mesmeric influence of his poetical eyes, which, in fine frenzies, shine large and open, like the planets Venus and Mars: slightly different in size and colour, but all the more impressive for those to whom variety is charming.

We watched them down the road, and admired. The mule went at leisurely and stately pace, the others followed in orderly confusion. Though it had rained with such vigour all night through, the roads were almost as dry as though there had been no downpour and no torrent. The fresh morning breeze fanned their cheeks and waved their locks and fluttered their garments. It was

all exhilarating, delicious, primitive : a quiet, calm, unworldly, ideal existence. These were so many Adams and Eves in Paradise. Yes, in spite of the salutation wafted to the cat and appropriated by H. C., I assert it fearlessly.

Whither bound so early ? Whither bound at all ? This was easily divined ; and we ought to have been ready to accompany them, if only to see the little congregation that dwelt in the dependencies of the Archduke.

It was Sunday morning, and they were on the road to church : the small church or chapel adjoining the Archduke's residence.

Here these simple people worship, in sound of the tideless sea, often in sight of it also ; the blue heavens above them. For the chapel is small, and some of the congregation remain outside and go through their service in the open air. The grandest edifice, the most sumptuous ritual, could never create so devotional a frame of mind as this blue dome, with the whispering trees and the murmuring sea for music. No ceremonial is needed here. Still, the people are superstitious, according to their lights ; and though, perhaps, unconsciously influenced by the beauties of nature, are more directly impressed by the priest, the altar, and the censer.

Our cavalcade went down the road, and presently might be seen winding through the sloping paths leading to the chapel. When we had duly inhaled all this beauty, this breezy call of incense-breathing morn, H. C., the poetical—and practical—suggested breakfast.

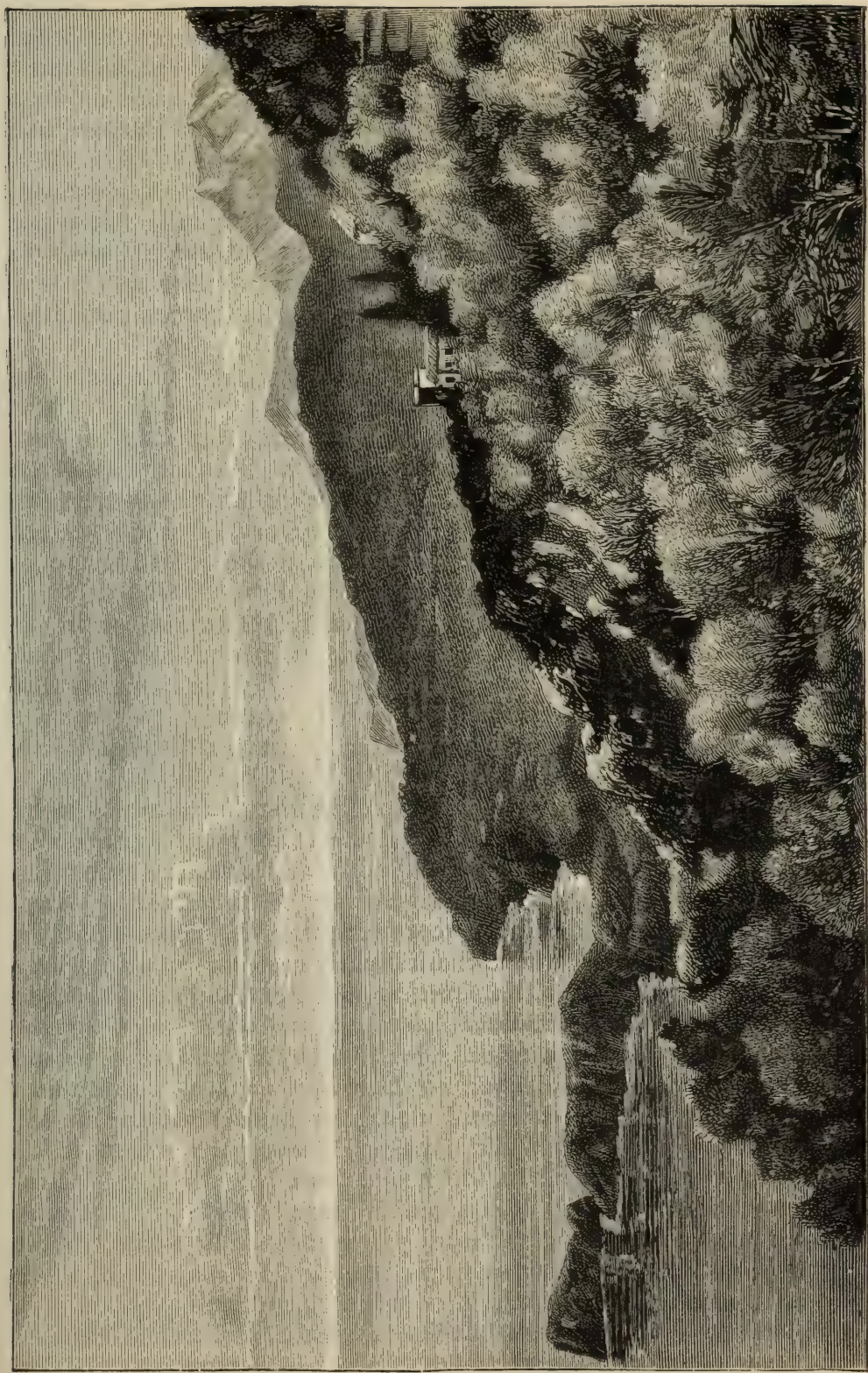
We went down. Silence and emptiness met us ; terms that might be applied to ourselves as well as to the house. Silence and emptiness, but no sign of breakfast. All doors were open except the front door. In fact, I think the front door was the only door in the lower regions : the others were only doorways.

We wandered through the rooms like troubled spirits. There was fire enough in the kitchen, any number of mysterious pots and pans, but to touch one of them was as much as life was worth. So we made a merit of necessity, opened the front door, let in the cat, let out ourselves, and wandered about the grounds : devoutly hoping the priest would be merciful and not keep them too long at church.

The old woman was the first to return. Evidently her conscience pricked her, and she had hastily told her beads. Perhaps this was what she had called up the stairs, just before leaving : exhorting us to patience and she would not tarry. Before long she had brewed us some of our own tea and boiled the inevitable eggs.

There was no milk to be had ; there never is any milk in these parts ; and we took our tea without it : a decoction neither wholesome nor pleasant. But they had packed up no coffee in Palma, and but for our own private supplies of tea, we should have been driven to make the best of water or wine.

H. C. groaned, looked cavernous, and suggested an immediate return to England. A land without milk and butter was worse than



A PORTION OF THE VIEW FROM OUR WINDOWS AT THE HOSPITERIA.

heathendom. I told him that he ought to look upon this as one of the trials of life, and he quite brightened up under the idea; deliberately rasped his tongue with strong undiluted tea, and then declared that he felt a martyr and happy. He also made up for it by such ravages upon our scanty larder that I grew alarmed, and suggested portioning out our stock of provisions.

The woman had brought from our store a small chicken, which was nothing but bones, and the remnant of a sheep, nothing but bones also. She asked us rather satirically which bones we would have for breakfast and which for luncheon, in the middle of the day. It was a choice of evils. H. C. tossed up—his usual habit when undecided—and the lot fell upon the chicken.

She must have understood that it was a wicked word, for she crossed herself and fled from the room.

Presently she returned with a steaming dish: the chicken done up in curried rice, and made twice as hot as need have been, no doubt with a view to carrying out H. C.'s expressed wishes. But she had certainly made of the whole a delicious and savoury mess. Our spirits revived, and we went out feeling, like Alexander, ready to conquer the world.

Before this, the rest of the cavalcade had returned, with the exception of the young girl, who had stayed behind somewhere—perhaps to see her brother, a young servant of the Archduke's. The house had resumed its normal condition of sound and occupancy. It was as noisy and lively as, in our own quarters, all was quiet and deserted.

We went out upon a very lovely world, but not a world to be conquered. It was difficult to imagine the elements of war and discord here as we sauntered down the road the cavalcade had taken in the early morning, and by which they had returned. Hills, wooded and romantic, towered to our right. We passed a solitary house by the roadside, with a charming but neglected-looking garden full of the cactus plant, with its prickly-pear fruit. Dry walls bounded the road, and from an occasional spring ran icy-cold water, whilst the almost natural fountain was made beautiful by a wealth of ferns and fronds: the delicate maidenhair not least conspicuous amongst them.

On the left, rich and cultivated slopes, often steep and precipitous, led far down to the blue Mediterranean. The tideless sea stretched away and away, until, lost in the horizon, sea and sky blended and dissolved into a harmony of one, the marriage of earth with heaven.

We came to cliffs barren and precipitous, and rocky terraces where the olive trees were now bare of fruit. Half way down, where the terraces ceased, the slopes grew more rugged and pathless. In front, a huge rock stretched out into the water like a sleeping lion. It looked far off and inaccessible, and in a wild moment we agreed to go down the slopes and scale the summit of this rocky fortress.

Away we went, jumping over dry walls from terrace to terrace,

laughing at the loose stones that every now and then caused us to miss our footing and sent us rolling onwards half a dozen yards or so. It was harder work on the bare cliffs, but there was no turning back, and it was keenest enjoyment. Near the sea a long white road gave evidence of some sort of civilisation. But nowhere was there any vestige of mankind.

We rounded huge boulders of cliff, ponderous enough to shake the world if they would only fall. Water dripped from them in icy and not very pleasant showers, as we passed under them. On reaching the sea level we were repaid for this mad escapade. Of course the tug of war would be in returning. It was all very well to get down the cliff, but how about getting up again?

Without troubling with hard problems, we took the good we saw before us. The rock ahead had to be scaled and our mission completed.

Above, it had looked small and insignificant. Now it had grown to great size, and jutted out into the blue sea like a promontory. The summit, pointed and narrow, resembled the backbone of a shark. Could we reach the end without rolling over, to make a great splash and find an unrecorded grave in the water that could be cruel or kindly, according to its moods and variations?

I wish I could so describe the scene that you might in some degree realise it as we did. Make you see the blueness of the sky; feel the warmth and brilliancy of the sunshine; hear the soothing splash of the water; inhale the rarified, intoxicating air, which affected one like champagne; made us wild and boyish and daring, light and free as the soaring lark, altogether and perfectly happy; just as if this would last for ever; as if there were no world without, no cares, heartaches, or headaches in existence. Do you not dread the morrow of those days when you feel particularly well or especially happy? In this instance is not the old saying often reversed, and coming events cast sunshine instead of shadow before them?

The white sand dazzled in the sunlight with a million sparkling grains that shone like diamond points. Over this rolled the Mediterranean, smooth, foaming and white-edged. Not the ebb and flow of other seas, but the soothing roll of waters fanned into motion by the soft southern winds of Heaven. To climb the rock was harder work than we had forseen, for no trodden path or rocky steps guided the way. It was very rough and rugged, and we often had to retrace our steps on reaching a point that hardly a goat or a coney would have hazarded.

But the rock was full of grandeur. Ferns adorned it wherever they could find roothold in nooks and broken crevices; and wild heath flowers, strong and hardy, were worthy of their rocky soil. Of course we picked a supply of souvenirs; and of course the usual fate will overtake them. Before we get back to England, they will have scattered and departed—with last year's hopes and garlands.

Upwards and onwards ; but we soon found that an attempt to get to the extreme end would be a pilgrimage. A pilgrimage, moreover, that would not atone for our sins, but rather add to them.

It was a dangerous expedition ; and however personally valueless our lives might be, we felt that afar off we both had those who watched and waited for our return ; who took some interest in us, if it was nothing more than Mrs. Jellaby's interest in Africa and Borrioboola Gha—the hope of making us better than we were. In short, of converting the heathen. Why will people attempt the impossible ?

So when we had reached a high nook, with a seat soft as rock could make it, and a smooth back evidently designed for the purpose, we came to an anchor and rested from our toil.

I shall never forget that rest ; that absolute repose.

It was Sunday, and a Sabbath stillness filled the air, and even a sound of bells ; that imaginary sound so often heard at the margin of the sea, which seems to come we know not whence and go we know not whither ; and puzzles us and sets us wondering ; sets us longing, like the song of a syren, to plunge into the waves and search for all this sense of sound, this hidden mystery.

We lay there bathed in sunshine, inhaling the soft sea breezes, revelling in the intense blue of the sky. It was the luxury of a refined existence. Our very solitude added a thousand-fold to the charms of this wide and high expanse. On either side, the cliffs were grand and wild, the coast was broken and uneven. Tongues of land stretched point beyond point. Down a great height of perpendicular cliff tumbled and tossed the loveliest of waterfalls, all spray and foam and fantastic grace. If anything in these southern climes could remind one of Norway, it was this. In those northern latitudes, I had seen hundreds of falls of which this might be an exact counterpart. The great storm of Saturday had no doubt swelled the torrent, and for the moment the body of water was formidable.

H. C. murmured something about Aphrodite's robe, but I stopped him at once, for he was verging on dangerous ground. If the intoxication of a fine frenzy seized him on this pinnacle of rock, it was certain that those over in England might watch and wait for him in vain, like so many Mariannas in a moated grange. In his unconverted state, the thought was agony.

Time passed unheeded. What could be more exquisite enjoyment ? All the dreams of the lotos eater, without his guilty conscience. If this existence would only go on for ever ! All about us the blue, flashing, murmuring sea : a soothing song of nature set to the accompaniment of a soft west wind, which fanned our "fevered brows," tempered the hot sunshine, and went onwards to rustle and whisper amongst the far off wooded hills.

Nothing lasts for ever. We had to give up dreaming and come back to earth, but it was only going from beauty to beauty. Now

began the climb down this slippery height ; jumping from rock to rock and risking many a downfall.

It all came right in the end. We felt a little stiff and a good deal



MIRAMAR.

bruised ; and H. C. tore his clothes and looked like the boy in the "Vagabond : " homeless, ragged and tanned. But as Mr. Toots says, it was not of much consequence ; there was no one to see ; and

no doubt the comely and intelligent woman at the Hospiteria was not less ready with her needle than with her wit. Of course he wore a coat, and I will allow you to suppose that it was his coat that had suffered.

I escaped, but then I weigh just half as much as H. C., and where he took to sliding and rolling: a sort of rocky, Mallorcan tobogganing: I merely jumped from one point to another on the light fantastic toe, like a gazelle (do gazelles have toes?), and so got over the ground. H. C. politely likened me to a scapegoat and himself to a respectable sheep, but it was nothing but envy at my unshattered condition as compared with his.

Down at last, we wandered along the road by the shore, wondering whether it would lead us upwards by a nearer and smoother way.

We came to the waterfall, and the cool spray fell upon us. We listened to its roar, watched its graceful, feathery forms, longed to precipitate ourselves beneath this natural shower-bath. Prudence withheld us.

We went on, and began to think we should find our short cut a very long one, our easy path a delusion. Then came a broken part of the road, evidently in course of repair: an old pipe carefully placed in a nook; a workman's jacket; signs of a recent fire; a suggestive bottle—alas, empty of everything but a delicious scent of strong waters, that might have given fresh stimulus to our flagging energies.

All the same we took heart of grace, went back to our starting-point, began to climb up the way we had come down. I will not pretend that it was not hard work, yet we delighted in it. If I suffer for it afterwards, I generally find myself equal to these occasions. Only, someday it may be that I shall try it once too often.

I was always ahead of H. C., who was everlastingly stopping and turning round, pretending to admire the scene, but in reality pausing for breath. At every terrace, I was always the one to scale first the dry walls, and hold out a helping hand. Thus, in this world, the mouse over and over again helps the lion. That fable is full of wisdom.

The high road at last; and, comparing notes, we found our mad excursion had taken five hours out of our day. But mad or sane, I think they will prove five of the most delicious hours we shall spend in Mallorca.

Only one thing troubled us. Paolo's defections, and the consequent state of our larder. As hungry as a hunter is an ordinary saying, but we had done much more than a hunter's work this morning.

Going leisurely up the road, we came to the picturesque, deserted-looking house already mentioned, its wild garden enclosed in dry and crumbling walls. A sundial upon the house told the hours. Nearly all these Mallorcan houses have sundials.

H. C. thought he would sketch it, and I, nothing loth to rest, perched myself on the dry wall beside him and looked on.

This did not please him. I must work, too ; and he commanded me to cross the road, lay siege to the garden and bring him some prickly pears to eat.

There was nothing for it but to obey. The first thing I did was to catch my foot in a tangle, tumble headlong into half a dozen cactus plants, and cover myself from head to foot with a thousand tantalising darts, the small weapons of the prickly-pear ; so minute that you can hardly see them, yet so sharp that you feel as if a whole needle manufactory had been discharged upon you.

Revenge tarried not. I brought back half a dozen fine prickly pears, which H. C. seized and devoured without due caution. The consequence was, that whilst my darts were all on the surface, his were all inside—a far worse state of things, as you may imagine. The contortions of St. Sebastien in the Town Hall at Palma were simply studies of grace compared with H. C.'s violent emotions and horrible grimaces.

Whilst sketching, the Archduke came down on a small white horse, and was very kind and amiable. Somehow, I thought of Sintram. He told us many things ; amongst others, that this solitary house had once been inhabited by the Patron Saint of Mallorca. We ventured to narrate our driver's bad conduct, and our fear of famine. He was full of sympathy ; seemed to think we were already sufficiently emaciated ; and was good enough to intimate that our larder should be no further cause of anxiety to us. I need not tell you how much I felt and appreciated a kindness tendered with such delicacy that it seemed to do away with all obligation. It is certain that but for the hospitable intent of His Royal Highness, we should have suffered the martyrdom of hunger.

We told the Archduke how we had spent our morning. He laughed, and wondered that we had voluntarily given ourselves so much hard work. We might have done it all much more easily and by an ordinary road. But we explained that with the inconsistency of human nature, we felt that without this hard work the excursion would have lost half its charm.

By this time the sketch was finished, with a fine foreground of cactus and prickly pears, very sympathetically put in, the darts as large as porcupine quills. Soon after we came to the Hospiteria. The old woman greeted us as she might have greeted life from the dead. You see we had ordered our bones for one o'clock, and it was now past four. I thought the younger woman would have embraced H. C. in her joy at his safety, but happily for the interests of morality and my own peace of mind, her husband came in at that moment, and she subsided.

Time having gone on to this hour, we satisfied our present wants with dry bread and wine, and ordered a more substantial repast for six or seven o'clock. It was very much like children playing at giving a dinner party, and treating each other to empty dishes with delicious

names to them. Our larder was empty; and our repast depended upon a promise lately given, but that I felt sure would not fail.

A curious apparition now made its appearance: a tall, cadaverous-looking monk, in brown cloak and cowl.

His face was kindly and placid, but its expression suggested that the mind within was not quite strong and sound. A fixed smile gave the face a childlike look, a little painful to see. Nothing charms more than the frankness of childhood, but there is a time for everything. The seven ages of man each have their signs and tokens, and each in turn must give place to the other.

Yet this simple face was of a type that ought to have been intelligent. He came up, made signs, talked, and pointed vigorously towards the hills above us. We could only imagine that there must be some monastery in the woods on the mountain side, which he was inviting us to visit. We found that it was so. But for the time being one could only shake one's head and acquiesce in what was said by this curious old monk. He seemed quite satisfied, and went off happy and contented. We watched him cross the road with long strides, pass through the small gateway, and disappear into the wood.

We also went out again, but the shadows were lengthening, and before long night would be upon us. There is very little twilight here; the light that in England is so pleasant and romantic, lingers long, yet is so inexpressibly sad. A solitary English landscape, in the gloaming amongst the solemn trees, is haunted by a sense of oppression that is almost like death itself. Those trees, with their silent shadows, put on a mysterious look and influence from which I have to fly as for life. The sea, on the contrary, at all hours of the day or night, gives one a sense of companionship: and in sound of the restless ocean, in the most solitary hour of life, one would never feel lonely or alone.

Returning to the Hospiteria, we found its sacred precincts invaded by new comers, and resented this as a personal affront.

Of course we had no right to do so, but on these occasions who stops to think of right or wrong? Equally of course we concealed our real feelings under a calm and polite exterior. H. C. indeed was quite gushing in his emotion. We had come across these people in Palma; they were Germans of the German; and he greeted them as if he had known them with bosom intimacy for a hundred years. This was very wrong of him, and made me long to administer a few more prickly pears.

To the great joy of one of us, they said they had made up their minds not to stay. The place was dull and dreary and uncivilised. "Positively no sheets to the beds!" they cried, with horror. "We are not disciples of Dr. Jaeger. How can you endure it?"

I did not say that we were more than happy and contented; our wants more than abundantly supplied; that the beds *had* sheets (was it

wicked to withhold this information ?); that our stay in this Hospiteria of Miramar, for some strange reason, would be marked in our life's record with a white stone.

We had so enjoyed our solitude that this invasion seemed nothing less than laying siege to our happiness. Again I say that we were unreasonable; had no earthly right to feel thus. But I can only confess my sins and shortcomings, and hold up to you a faithful mirror of my daily life in these regions—within prudent limits of course. Anything especially indiscreet is buried in the profoundest depths of my inner consciousness.

Truth to say, it would be difficult, in this small island, leading



WHERE I FELL AMONGST THE PRICKLY PEARS.

our quiet lives, to err very far from the world's path of conventional rectitude. This is a sentence overweighted with long words that are not, I suppose, pure Saxon. But a weighty subject is worthy of exceptional treatment.

And after all, I am only describing my own emotions. H. C. is omniverous in the way of companionship, and devours all he comes across. I have failed in everything, if I have failed to show you that he has great powers of adaptation, and can put up equally with fish, flesh, fowl or good red herring. I dare say he is right in the main: it is useless to pretend that I can go and do likewise.

So when these good people declared that after a little refreshment they meant to return to Palma, I felt quite a philanthropic glow toward them, and was ready to minister to their needs as far as our humble board permitted. The lady sat in the refectory with her

umbrella up, as a precaution against draughts. But they were independent of contributions, and were far better provisioned than ourselves. Or, rather, than we had been. For, thanks to the goodness of the Archduke, famine no longer stared us in the face. Our evening meal was sumptuous in comparison with what had gone before.

Presently the new arrivals went away, and we speeded the parting guests. The last we saw of them was the lady's umbrella, still held up as a precaution against the draughts of the road.

Our evening passed quietly. The domestic scenes of the previous night were absent. Things never quite repeat themselves. To-night, somehow, though dressed in their Sunday's best, they were not so interesting ; had put on their Sunday manners ; a certain stiffness due to nothing more formidable than a change of costume.

They were in greater force also. Neighbours had come in and asserted their influence in a chorus of sounds that did not at all resemble a concert of nightingales.

Whilst we dined at one table and one end of the room, these good people dined at the other table and the other end of the room. It was amusing to watch their ways and manners : interesting not as models, but as certain phases.

Night had fallen ; lamps were lighted, and threw their ghostly shadows about the room. Lighted up also the faces of these our entertainers, with an effect to which Schalken and Rembrandt would have done honour : the one reproducing the effects of light, the other those of darkness.

Presently we went up to our rooms, and took out our books. H. C. filled in a sketch. In time a ghostly hour struck. Everything in the house had become silent ; the peace of repose ; the quiet of sleep, which is so like death. We, too, sought oblivion : but to one of us it did not come. All night long my dreams were haunted by the beauties of Miramar, and all through the dark hours I lived again in the past day.

This morning brought the Archduke, and we were able to thank his Royal Highness once more for having come to our rescue. We spent nearly the whole morning with him.

He took us to the most interesting points on his estate ; paths and nooks and striking coup-d'œils we should never otherwise have seen ; showed us all over his house, with its interesting collections of Mallorcan curiosities and antiquities. Wonderful old cabinets and coffres ; magnificently carved old bedsteads ; a great collection of real majolica ; a good deal of quaint old glass. But I cannot tell you of half we saw. He initiated us into the mysteries of the beer and wine of the country, the former of which H. C. so greatly appreciated that the Archduke insisted upon despatching some of it to the Hospiteria. In vain we assured him that we should return to Palma before many hours had passed.

He showed us all the beauty of his grounds and gardens, plucked

us roses, and introduced me to the fruit of the arbutus, which is finer here than in England. His conversation was varied and delightful; he seemed to speak all languages alike. He also showed us his collection of photographs, taken with his own camera, which immediately put me out of all conceit with ours. I have rarely seen photographs so beautiful and effective, and I fear that I coveted some of them. They gave one so wonderfully correct an idea of Mallorca, both place and people. As the Archduke observed, these photographs are inartistic and unsatisfying compared with one's personal sketches, but it is not everyone who possesses his talent for drawing and etching.

So the moments flew in golden grains until we found ourselves back in the Hospiteria, and our stay drawing to a close.

Before leaving, we determined to go up into the mountain and search for the little monastery. We plunged into the wood, and the path was sufficiently indicated to prevent our going very far astray.

We came at last to a small building perched on the hill side, overlooking the lovely sea and coast. It looked poverty stricken, and it is so. This monastery is all that remains of great wealth; of a day when the monks of Mallorca had power and a history, and ruled very much as they willed.

So the little building takes one back in imagination to far off days, when the monks would have disdained so poor a shelter. For the sake of that past it is interesting.

We rang a bell, which echoed loudly in all the surrounding quiet; pealed and echoed, and nothing more. It brought forth no response. Were the monks all dead or sleeping? We wandered round, and I suppose came to sacred precincts: a small vegetable garden. Outside the doorway of the house sat an old, old monk; toothless, apparently voiceless; wrinkled and curved and marked with hoary hairs. Such a pitiable object! Pitiable because apparently so helpless; all hope in life over; simply waiting for the end. Your heart would have bled for him.

He was cobbling away at an old garment: an old brown cloak with the inevitable capuchon, so suggestive of sandals, and penitential fasts, and lacerations of the flesh, and death to the world. He looked up as we came upon him, started violently, seemed frightened, and finally disappeared. Whether through a trap door, or up a chimney, or through a window, the evaporation was so sudden and mysterious, we never knew. It was probably forbidden him to look upon the face of man, and he would have to do penance for our sin in finding him out.

But having discovered that the place was inhabited, we went back and gave another vigorous pull to the bell. This time it brought forth our old friend the monk, who seemed overjoyed to see us again, and welcomed us with effusion.

Within, the place was bare and cold, with every sign and symptom

of poverty about it. In the refectory, the table was spread for the monks: some six or eight places in all. Each plate was covered with a coarse napkin, and beneath each napkin was a little hard brown bread and a few olives. A tumbler of cold water stood beside each plate. Could anything less keep body and soul together? Can these poor monks indeed be said to possess a body which is generally composed not of a mere skeleton only, but of certain proportions of flesh and blood?

In the small passages were the few cells of the few monks. Our guide opened one. It was empty. The poor inmate had gone to its rest and its account. What temptations could possibly assail it here? Of what sins could it be guilty? The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life—these must have been dead and stifled long since in such an atmosphere.

The small chapel possessed neither wealth nor superfluous ornament.

Our guide opened the harmonium in the gallery and begged us to play. But the very sound of music startled us and seemed as out of place as the Dead March at a wedding, or the Wedding March at a funeral. We went through a solemn air, whilst our simple guide bent his head in listening attitude full of devotion, as if he could hear something beyond those strains; a melody closed to our less ethereal ears.

We shut it up and went down. Already the bell was tolling a sad, monotonous call to vespers. As we looked down the passage, the monks flitted out of their cells like broken images of resignation, cowed and noiseless of tread, and disappeared to their places in the chapel.

They had their service to themselves, for we were turning away. The simple monk led us through the garden, picked us a few flowers, and pointed to the celestial view over land and sea—for I can hardly think the word misplaced. Then he conducted us to the outer gate and gave us a blessing: and the small dole we left in his hand must have been more than welcome.

He closed the gate, and we saw him walk up the path and disappear within the little monastery, where these monks pass a veritable death-in-life existence. I have seen many monasteries, but none that impressed me so sadly as this small refuge in the Mallorcan hills.

We found our way down to the Hospiteria. Paolo awaited us with the carriage, looking as innocent and unconcerned as if he had not been perverse and faithless. He manifested no surprise at seeing us alive, though he ought to have expected to find nothing but famished corpses to take back to Palma. He was very officious in helping with the luggage, and tried to put on quite a friendly and benign expression.

We took leave of our friends and the Hospiteria, and departed with a strangely reluctant heart. I cannot tell you how sorry I was

to leave Miramar. Instead of three days, we longed to devote a month to it. Paolo cracked his whip and away we went up the hill, out of sight and sound of the sea.

We clattered into Valdemosa, of which, for the first time, we saw and appreciated the grand and romantic beauty. Hills towered on all sides, grave, sombre and majestic. The town bridged the chasm between the chains, and filled up the valley. Its houses looked old and crumbling and lichen-stained: that picturesque and peculiar look only time and weather will give.

The street we passed through was narrow and uneven. At a large covered well or fountain, some dozen or fifteen women were washing clothes, laughing and talking, full of admiration for the barouche: though H. C. would tell you a different tale. There was no time to sketch them, but we took their photograph, and I wish we could have recorded their animated tones and gestures also.

They were delighted at the operation. Nothing pleases them more, wherever you go.

I suppose they look upon it somewhat in the light of fame. If they know nothing about it, at least, they have a certain sense or feeling of going out into the world and becoming known. Some of them, indeed, are pretty enough to create a sensation in a book of Beauties, and, if these are the exception, they are only following in the way of the world; for where are beauties not the exception?

On this occasion they went back to their washing for the express purpose of being taken characteristically, put themselves into poses, and for a moment hushed their voices and laughter, and evidently felt the importance of the occasion. Then, when it was all over, they broke out again like a Greek chorus: perhaps not quite so classical, and yet nothing could have been more ancient-looking, classical and beautiful than our surroundings on this occasion: and went back to their curious examination of the camera from a respectful distance, and their unmistakable glances of admiration at H. C.

He went up to them—to thank them, as he said: and I thought they would never have let him come away again. Of course, it was his own fault; he had bearded the lion in his own den; gone deliberately into the enemy's camp; but I have no doubt he enjoyed it very much. They formed a ring round him and danced and sang, just as I have seen the old fish-wives do in some of the ancient sea-ports of France, when one very much above them comes rashly into their midst. In those instances the enviable captive has never been released under penalty—or reward?—of a chaste salute from the leader of the van: and comely and picturesque as those fish wives are, with their costume, and frills and gold ornaments, and faces shining with health, many a ransom might be less willingly paid.

In this case I will not tell you whether there was any ransom or not. Why should I reveal secrets and declare exquisite emotions? I will only say that when I had carefully and deliberately packed up our

machine, restored everything to its place and was ready to depart, H. C. emerged from this crowd of Hebes, flushed, excited and radiant ; and my only regret was that I had disposed of the camera, and was unable to take a facsimile of him as he then and there appeared.

In a future letter I must send you a sketch of one of these busy scenes, which are so eminently Mallorcan. The well or washing place is a long, low building, often roofed with red tiles and supported by rough pillars. Here the women stand in a long row, or all round an immense stone trough, where they wash their linen and laugh and chatter, and seem altogether happy and contented. Of course such encounters as the above form the fête-days of their existence, and give them food for thought and badinage, and silent contemplation of blissful moments.

After all, the Rose of Love must be plucked in the morning of life. The afternoon comes when all things couleur-de-rose have faded, and poetry has become prose, and the voice of the charmer has ceased to charm wisely ; our fool's paradise disappears and DISILLUSION reigns in its stead.

But romance ought to linger long in Valdemosa. The very air you breathe is laden with it. The very aspect of the place is unrivalled. Its cypresses and orange trees, its almonds and olives, give it a rich and unfamiliar aspect. The hills tower around, all shapes and forms and heights, chain after chain. The white clouds obscure them for a moment and pass away, and the blue sky reigns triumphant, making glad your heart, so that all your pulses sing for joy. And what a joy ! Oh, this world is good to live in ! And there are moments of purest ecstasy amongst these beauties and solitudes of nature that you would not barter for a King's crown or a Jew's ransom. If time would only stand still, and the world be ever young, and youth and hope and feeling be ever fresh and fair !

But the sun never stands still or goes back. All passes away ; just as we passed away that afternoon from Valdemosa ; and left the laughing girls at the fountain ; laughing no longer, but throwing sighs and regrets after H. C., which he echoed and repeated until I almost grew melancholy myself.

On we went, down, down, past the wonderful old olive trees that take every fantastic shape you can imagine : often grotesque to hideousness, yet curious and interesting. On through the rich Palma plains, with their olives and almonds ; and so into Palma town.

The aristocratic rumble of our barouche rolling through the streets startled the air, and the place became animated. The sound was too well known to be mistaken. Who passed that way ?

Windows flew open, doors were flung back ; we made quite a royal progress.

"Shall I bow right and left ?" said H. C. "They seem to expect it." But at that very moment my beautiful tripod beneath his feet

gave way, and he collapsed like a telescope and disappeared. The people thought it conjuring, and applauded. I felt humiliated. Our royal progress was being turned into a mere mountebank exhibition. However, all was well. The king can do no wrong. Nothing but honour could attend the barouche.

At the Fonda de Mallorca we received an ovation from its collected inmates. And here we are once more. The success of this excursion has only made us the more anxious for the next.

It is very pleasant to get back to our old quarters. After the solitude of Miramar, we feel amongst a great crowd of people in a large city. We have returned to civilisation. H. C. at the table d'hôte this evening felt himself on Olympus, indulging in nectar and ambrosia. He passed nothing, and declared that the Trois Frères in Paris could never equal the Fonda de Mallorca.

It is night. Such a night. An ethereal, dark blue dome, stars like saucers (an unpoetical but I hope graphic comparison), balmy airs and a tideless sea stretching away in unseen immensity; a cathedral in sable outlines, looking grander and more imposing than ever.

We have enjoyed it all on the ramparts, where, as usual, H. C. led me to the verge of pitfalls and precipices. When we returned, I distinctly saw the poetical mood coming on. So after he had brewed some tea, and ordered a quart of milk, to make up for its absence at Miramar, I recommended him to retire before his brain grew too excited for repose. He is amenable, and away he went, leaving me with windows open to the night air, and to the enjoyment of some quiet hours, which, as usual, I have devoted to you.

I have grown to feel at home here, and to like this bare and plain little room. I hear, too, *Il Sereno* coming down the street, announcing not a ghostly hour, but one much nearer cockcrow. I hear his tread, see the swing of his lantern, and the ghostly shadows it casts; I catch the rhythm of his cry.

"Oh, watchman, what of the night? what of the night?" my spirit cries in return. "After the NIGHT of DEATH, whither, oh, whither, shall we wake to the MORNING of LIGHT?"

Let me away to oblivion before my mood changes to melancholy. I would rather send you sunshine than shadow. But, come noon or night, chance or change, good or ill, life or death, to you, and to *her*, our BELOVED, in time and eternity, I am unchangeable.

I cannot wish you Good-night, for it is morning; but here, as I hope to do one day in some happier clime, I wish you Good-morrow.



A LAST CHANCE.

ON a certain morning in September, 1865, Monsieur Aristide Mouron, a retired mercer, occupying a third floor in the Rue Turenne, received a letter by the early post.

"Singular!" he remarked, partly to himself, partly to his daughter, a pretty blonde who was sitting near him, engaged with some fancy work; "I don't know the handwriting. No," he added, peering at the address through his spectacles, "I certainly never saw it before."

"Hadn't you better open it, father?" said Mlle. Claire in a slightly impatient tone.

"All in good time my dear," replied M. Mouron, still staring at the envelope in profound meditation. Then, carefully extracting from it the enclosed epistle, he looked at the signature. "Victor Duhamel," he exclaimed. "What can he have to say to me?"

"Read it, papa, and we shall know," quietly suggested the young lady.

"'Monsieur,'" slowly began the old gentleman, "'you will doubtless be surprised on receiving this,'—What a hand he writes; positively copperplate! He ought to be book-keeper in some big house of business, but unfortunately he isn't. Let me see, where was I?—'On receiving this, and be disposed to consider the request I am about to make to you an act of presumption. But even a refusal is preferable to suspense, and I can control my feelings no longer.'—I haven't the remotest idea what he means!"

"Read a little further," insinuated his daughter. "We shall soon see."

"'In a word, I love Mademoiselle Claire, and have reason to believe that the attachment is reciprocal!' Eh, what?" cried M. Mouron, with a sudden start that nearly upset his chair. "Is this true or do my eyes deceive me?"

"Perfectly true, papa."

"That he has the audacity to love you, and actually presumes to think ——"

"That I love him in return," supplemented Mlle. Claire. "Certainly he does, and only waits for your consent to our marriage."

"How do you know that?"

"Because he told me yesterday he intended to ask you for it."

"Indeed! Then you may tell him that I distinctly refuse to hear another word on the subject. A young fellow without a sou!"

"That is no fault of his," remonstrated Claire. "Besides, if he has no fortune, he is sure to make one. You have said so yourself."

"I?"

"Yes, I have often heard you compliment him on his literary

attainments, and say that he was certain to make his way in the world."

"If I did, it does not follow that I should choose him for a son-in-law. If he had only something in hand to begin with!"

"That is just what we are coming to," said Claire. "The end of his letter explains everything."

"Ah! you seem to know all about it."

"Of course I do. I have a copy of it in my pocket."

"In that case," replied M. Mouron in a half-amused, half angry tone, taking up the letter as he spoke, "I may as well know it too. 'My sole object in life is to be the husband of Mademoiselle Claire, but not until I am able to offer her a position in some degree worthy of her. To the accomplishment of my desire, every faculty I possess will henceforth be devoted, and I am confident of success. One year's probation is all I ask. At its expiration, I pledge myself either to bring you a sum of twenty thousand francs as an earnest of what I hope to do in the future, or at once to renounce all claim to your daughter's hand.' H'm," concluded M. Mouron, "twenty thousand francs isn't much, but the lad speaks fairly enough."

"Wouldn't it be better, papa," slyly suggested Claire, "to hear what he has to say? He is not far off."

"How do you know where he is?"

"Because it has just struck nine, and at that hour he was to be in the street opposite our house."

Then, without waiting for an answer, she opened the window and made a sign which was evidently expected, for a minute or two later the servant announced "Monsieur Victor Duhamel."

On the entrance of his visitor, M. Mouron assumed a majestic air, and acknowledged the young man's respectful salutation by a patronising wave of the hand.

"Pray be seated, Monsieur Victor," he began, affecting a dignified ease of manner, but in reality hardly less embarrassed than the individual he addressed. "I have perused your letter—a most creditable specimen of penmanship, I must say—and gather from it that you are—ahem—desirous of obtaining my consent to your marriage with my daughter."

Victor bowed assent. "It is my fondest hope," he replied.

"I will not deny," pursued the ex-mercier, "that I had other views—financially more advantageous—for her. But under the circumstances," here his hatchety features relaxed into something between a smile and a grin: "I might be disposed to waive my objections and accept your conditions, if I saw any reasonable chance of your fulfilling them."

"I assure you," said Duhamel, "that ——"

"Excuse me," interrupted M. Mouron, "but a few questions are indispensable. May I ask what are your present means of existence?"

"My salary as a clerk in a government office, amounting to a hundred and five francs a month."

"Total, twelve hundred and sixty francs a-year. No other resource?"

"None. My earnings have hitherto sufficed for my wants, and I have even economised a few hundred francs out of them. Henceforth it will be different. I shall resign my situation to-day, and depend upon my own exertions."

"They may possibly bring you in less," said M. Mouron with an ominous shake of the head. "And your projects for the future, what are they?"

"To utilize the excellent education I have received, and turn my knowledge to account. I am well acquainted with the principal modern languages, and speak them fluently; the classics have always been my favourite study; and in my leisure hours I have acquired some proficiency in the oriental tongues. Besides, I have a natural taste for painting, and have even dabbled in chemistry. With so many chances in my favour, one at least ought to serve my turn."

"I hope it may," returned M. Mouron doubtfully; "but in my business twenty thousand francs were not so easily gained. However, it rests with you to succeed or fail. To-day is the fifteenth of September, 1865; on this day next year, if you have kept your word, I will keep mine. Until then, adieu."

"You believe in me still, Mademoiselle?" said Victor, with a passing glance at Claire as he left the room.

"With all my heart and for ever," was her reply.

Ten months after the above recorded interview, a young man, the occupant of a miserable attic in the Leopoldstadt, the poorest quarter of Vienna, was sitting in a despondent attitude at a rickety deal table, on which lay an unfinished letter. His pale and careworn features bore the unmistakable marks of suffering and privation, and he sighed deeply as he threw down his pen.

"I cannot do it," he muttered, in a voice broken by emotion. "The task is too hard, too cruel. And yet I must release her from this fatal engagement, which I once insanely hoped would be a source of happiness to both. Those who have struggled as I have can alone know what it has cost me to bear up against the consciousness of failure, and, still despairing, cling to the delusive visions conjured up by a disordered brain! A few words more will tell the tale, and they must be written."

With a look of inexpressible anguish, he read over the commencement of his letter, and had already taken up his pen to continue it, when the door opened gently, and a stout, thickset personage with a frank and pleasant countenance entered the room.

"Herr Victor," said the new comer in German, "pardon the intrusion. Not having met you for some days, I feared you might

be ill, and came to see if I could be of any service. You work too hard, my good friend, and overtax your strength. Take a doctor's advice and come with me. We will dine together, and a stroll in the Prater will do you no harm."

"You are very kind, Herr Rieger," replied Duhamel with a faint attempt at a smile; "but I feel so weak and dispirited that ——"

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed his visitor, as a sudden thought struck him. "I see it all now: you have eaten nothing to-day?"

Victor hid his face in his hands. "Nor yesterday," he faltered out. "I have not a kreutzer left."

"That at least can be remedied," said the Doctor; "and the sooner the better. Put on your hat and come. When we have dined, you shall tell me your story."

A comfortable repast in an adjoining restaurant, and a glass or two of sparkling Hungarian wine especially recommended by Herr Rieger, having somewhat invigorated his companion, the former handed a cigar to his guest, and lit another himself.

"I can't say much for our Viennese tobacco," he observed; "but you probably know something about government monopolies in France."

Victor thought of the inscrutable productions of Gros-Caillou, and answered emphatically in the affirmative.

"And now, my friend," continued the Doctor, "let us talk seriously. Since I first had the pleasure of making your acquaintance in the bookseller's shop near the Graben, I have often wondered that with your abilities you have not succeeded in turning them to some account."

"The usual ill luck, I suppose," replied Duhamel, "that a literary man and an artist—and unfortunately for me I am both—must expect when he has neither influence nor money to back him. I have tried everything in vain. Publishers with one accord declined even to look at my manuscripts, or proposed to print them at my expense. A commission I had solicited from government to copy a Murillo at the Louvre brought me the munificent offer of five hundred francs for a year's labour. At last, despairing of success in Paris, and having a special object in view, on the accomplishment of which my future happiness entirely depended, I came hither in the hope of discovering an old friend, a Viennese by birth, of whom I had lost sight for several years, and who would certainly have aided me by every means in his power. I was too late. On enquiry, I ascertained that after embarking his whole fortune in a speculation which had failed, he had left the country and emigrated to America. My scanty resources were nearly exhausted, and had not the bookseller, in whose shop I met you, kindly recommended me as a teacher of French to two or three of his lady customers, I should probably have starved. As it is, since the warm weather set in, my pupils have followed the example of the fashionable world and started off for

Ischl or the Tyrol. Until I can procure some other employment, I am absolutely penniless."

"Well, well," said Herr Rieger, "we must contrive to find something for you. But first, I am curious to know what the special object on which you are so intent can possibly be?"

"You will laugh at me," replied Victor, "when I tell you that in order to attain it I must be in possession, before the fifteenth of September, of no less than twenty thousand francs."

"Twenty thousand francs!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Nearly ten thousand Austrian florins! If I earn half that sum in a year, I consider myself exceptionally lucky. You must be mad to dream of such a thing."

"Mad or sane matters little now," sighed Duhamel, "as you will say when you have heard my story."

Herr Rieger listened attentively while the young man briefly narrated the result of the interview in the Rue Turenne, and his inability to fulfil the conditions on which depended his marriage with Claire.

"I see no way out of it," he said; "unless ——"

"Unless what?"

"Nothing. The idea is too absurd. And yet," he added after a moment's reflection, "it is just possible. Tell me: have you a good digestion?"

"Excellent. Why?"

"Never mind. Do you dislike pigeon?"

"On the contrary. But what has that to do with my position?"

"Everything. Listen to me, and don't interrupt. There is a Society in Vienna, of which I am a member, whose object is to investigate the truth or falsity of certain popular theories which are not based on established facts. One of these, namely, the physical impossibility of eating a pigeon every day for an entire month, has particularly engaged our attention; and, in consideration of the difficulty of the task, a prize of ten thousand florins has been offered by the Society to anyone who may succeed in accomplishing it. Many have already tried and failed in the attempt; the prize therefore remains unclaimed, and as oddly enough the amount is identical with the sum required by you, it struck me that you might be disposed to brave the ordeal. What say you? It is a last chance, but I warn you beforehand, a very poor one."

Victor stared at the speaker in amazement.

"Do I understand rightly," he enquired, "that after eating a pigeon every day for a month I am to receive ten thousand florins?"

"Undoubtedly."

"That of course settles the matter. Provided I get the money, it signifies little how. I should have preferred relying on my intellectual rather than on my digestive faculties, but as it seems that your Society considers the brain an organ of less importance than the stomach, I have no choice. When can I begin?"

"If you have quite made up your mind," replied Herr Rieger, "I will introduce you to our president to-day, and you can begin whenever it suits you."

"The sooner the better," said Victor.

The locality in which the Society's meetings were held was on the second floor of a spacious house in one of the principal streets of the city, and on the arrival of the Doctor and his companion, they were ushered into a waiting-room, where the president, Herr Professor Langenbart, a tall, thin personage of cadaverous aspect, shortly after joined them. Herr Rieger having briefly explained the motive of their coming, and presented Duhamel as a candidate for the pigeon prize, the professor brightened visibly, and courteously complimented the latter on his devotion to the cause of science.

"The task you are about to undertake, Herr Duhamel," he continued, "is a difficult one, as you may judge from the amount of recompense which, thanks to the ample resources of our Society, we are in a position to offer. No one has hitherto succeeded in the attempt; and it remains to be seen whether you are destined to be more fortunate, which I sincerely hope both for your sake and ours. Before, however, proceeding further, it is necessary that you should fully understand and agree to the following conditions approved by the Society, which I will now read to you."

"Firstly. The candidate for the prize engages, at a stated hour every day during an entire month, to eat a roasted pigeon, not a particle of which, the bones of course excepted, is to be left unconsumed. Two members of the committee will be present on each occasion, and will report progress every evening to the Society.

"Secondly. If the candidate succeeds in his undertaking, he will be entitled to receive ten thousand florins from the Society.

"Thirdly. Should he fail to complete the task, he cannot again compete for the prize.

"Fourthly. If he be prevented by illness from continuing the experiment, he will be allowed one hundred florins for medical expenses.

"Lastly. Should he unfortunately succumb to the ordeal, he will be buried at the cost of the Society, and the cause of his death will be inscribed in letters of gold on his tomb.

"These," concluded the professor, "are the terms of agreement. Are you disposed to accept them?"

Victor, who appeared disagreeably impressed rather than gratified by the final clause, replied curtly in the affirmative.

"In that case, Herr Duhamel," said the president, "if you have no objection, this interesting experiment may as well date from to-morrow, shall we say at three o'clock? My colleagues, Herr Commerzien-Rath Schulze and Herr Assessor Müller, will await you here at that hour, and I trust, enjoy the enviable privilege of ultimately recording your success."

"He will never get through it," muttered the professor, changing

his tone when Victor, by no means elated by the prospect before him, had left the room. Wants stamina, and looks as pale as a ghost."

"I am not so sure of that," said Herr Rieger. "He is terribly in love, and love they say, works miracles."

During the first few days of the enforced regimen, Victor, who had now become an inmate of the Doctor's house, and was consequently well cared for by his hospitable entertainer, accomplished his allotted task without difficulty. But before a fortnight had expired, his energy sensibly flagged, and it was only by a strong effort that he was able to persevere. The odour of the pigeon was inexpressibly repugnant to him; his eyes were bloodshot and his lips parched with fever, stimulated by the irritating nature of the food he forced himself mechanically to swallow. On the twenty-fifth day, he was hardly recognisable; and the president, alarmed by the unfavourable report of his two colleagues, decided that in order to avoid unnecessary risk, the experiment should continue in the house of Herr Rieger, he himself and the Doctor officiating as witnesses.

The latter was still confident of success. "He has a marvellous vitality," he said to Langenbart when they were alone, "and is determined not to give in. I sounded him on the subject this morning, and his answer was: 'When a man is three quarters of the way up a hill, he never rests until he has reached the top.' And depend upon it, reach it he will."

Herr Rieger's confidence was amply justified by the result. At the expiration of the month the last pigeon had been demolished and the prize fairly and indisputably won. The president and the Society were enraptured, and unanimously agreed that an additional honorarium of five hundred florins, together with a diploma commemorative of the event, should be presented to the successful candidate, who, meanwhile, lay in a critical state, a prey to fever and delirium.

It needed all the worthy medico's skill and care to arrest the progress of the malady, and nearly three weeks had elapsed before his patient was pronounced out of danger. The turning point, however, once reached, he gained strength rapidly; and, buoyed up by the cheering prospect of speedily realising his fondest hopes, impatiently counted the days which still separated him from Claire.

"How can I sufficiently thank you, Doctor, for all the kindness I have received at your hands?" he said one evening to his host, while the latter was busily engaged in superintending the preparations for the invalid's supper.

"By getting well as soon as possible," laughingly replied Herr Rieger. "I ought rather to thank you, for it is a glorious feather in my cap to have cured the winner of the pigeon prize!"

Two days before our hero's departure from Vienna, a general meeting of the members of the Society was convened in his honour; on which occasion the sum of ten thousand five hundred florins, together with a voluminous diploma, were formally delivered to him.

Professor Langenbart treated the assembly to a long discourse on the peculiar properties of the pigeon, considered as an article of food, in which he not unnaturally got out of his depth and floundered woefully ; but wound up triumphantly by proposing, amid the enthusiastic cheers of all present, that Herr Duhamel should be elected an honorary member of the society. As a fitting conclusion to the proceedings, a serenade was given on the same evening beneath the Doctor's windows, with which the recipient of this flattering homage, completely exhausted by his previous exertions, would doubtless have willingly dispensed.

On the fourteenth of September, 1866, Victor arrived in Paris ; and next morning, as nine o'clock struck, entered the well-known room in the Rue Turenne, where he found M. Mouron and his daughter sitting together, as he had left them a year ago.

"Tiens !" exclaimed the old gentleman, laying aside his newspaper. "Monsieur Victor Duhamel ! I never thought you would come back."

"I told you he would, papa," said Claire, glancing fondly at her lover. "I was sure of it."

"Bless me, how thin and wan you look !" continued her father, struck with the young man's haggard air. "You have been working too hard."

"But to some purpose," answered Victor, drawing from his pocket a roll of bank-notes fresh from the money-changer's, and laying them on the table. "You see, I have kept my word."

"And I," said M. Mouron, when he had methodically counted the notes, "will keep mine. Claire is yours ; but as I can't part with my little girl, we must make room for you here. As it happens, you are come in the very nick of time. My successor in the business is looking out for a partner, and with your twenty thousand francs and as much again from me, there will be a famous opening for a young couple. What say you ?"

"That I am the happiest of men," cried Duhamel, cordially grasping the hand of his future father-in-law.

"Is Monsieur Victor quite sure," slyly whispered Claire, "that he does not regret his year's probation ?"

"Regret it !" echoed her lover. "How can I, when it has brought me back to you !"

"But you wouldn't care to go through it again, I'll wager," said M. Mouron.

"Victor hesitated a moment before replying :

"Few things would daunt me," he said at length, whilst a shudder ran through him. "But even for such a prize," with a gallant look at Mademoiselle Claire, "I do not think I could a second time go through such an ordeal !"

CHARLES HERVEY.

THE MISSING RUBIES.

BY SARAH DOUDNEY.

CHAPTER IX.

"KNOW'ST THOU THE LAND?"

"LET me sing the first verse for you again," said Mr. Vordenberg. And in his mellow voice he sang, not loudly, but with a subdued intensity of feeling, the song that Mignon sang to Wilhelm Meister: "Know'st thou the land?"

Beatrice, as she stood and listened, felt the full power of Beethoven's immortal melody as she had never felt it before. To every note her heart throbbed; and the mystery and yearning of the words charmed, and yet pained, her strangely as they flowed from the singer's lips.

"Know'st thou it then? 'Tis there! 'Tis there!"

he sang, with such a passionate longing in his tones that the pupil absolutely trembled; and when, turning round at the end of the verse he met her eyes, they were glistening through tears.

"The land—where is it?" she asked involuntarily.

"Mignon's land? It was in Italy, you know," he said, looking at her attentively. "But a man who loves his country has but one land, and he sings of it always, in his heart and with his lips, in words like these. This is an exile's song, and that makes it so sadly sweet."

The last sentence fell from him with a sigh, his dark eyes were burning, but his face was as pale and calm as ever. An idea had flashed suddenly into her mind, waking up feelings of infinite compassion and sympathy, and her voice was tremulous and very gentle when she spoke again.

"Banishment is a terrible thing; but it is possible, I think, to be happy in the land of one's adoption if one can form new ties and make new friends."

"Ah! for some it is easy to make new friends," he answered; "but for others, life seems only filled with echoes of the past."

"But need it be so? Must it always be so?"

"Always," he said quietly. "You are not perhaps in the mood to sing this song to-night," he added, after a slight pause. "Let us choose something less thrilling—something that does not compel us to throw the heart into it. Where is the old-fashioned English song I heard you sing as you ran downstairs?"

"Drink to me only with thine eyes," she replied. "My grandfather used to ask for it very often. It reminds me of our cottage

sitting-room with its low ceiling and queer old furniture ; and I seem to hear Mrs. Milton playing the accompaniment on our jingling old piano, while grandpapa smoked his pipe and beat time. So that song is one of the echoes of *my* past, Mr. Vordenberg."

"You are fortunate," he said gravely, "if your past sends out no sadder echo than the music of an old song. Come, Miss Ward, you shall sing it to me, and I will play the accompaniment on my piano, which does not jingle."

And Beatrice sang, and was patiently corrected and instructed, and advised to practise her singing exercises. And meanwhile the sunset glow was fading over the housetops, and the cool breath of evening came creeping up the London street and stealing in through the open window.

She had glanced round the room with observing eyes when she had first entered. Musical instruments were plentiful ; there was a violin lying on a side-table, a guitar leaning against the wall, a harp in one corner, and a flute resting on the top of a pile of music. The well-filled book-shelves seemed to say that Mr. Vordenberg was a busy reader ; and several volumes, with Mudie's labels on their covers, showed that he liked to study the literature of the day. There were one or two tin boxes, an open desk with pen and paper lying ready for use, and a great bundle of newspapers ; but no valuable china, no bronzes, nor choice articles of bric-a-brac, and not a single photograph was to be seen.

"Did you have a happy day yesterday?" he suddenly asked, turning away from the piano. "Mrs. Milton said you were all going to Richmond."

"Yes ; I was very happy," said Beatrice, with a sort of shyness in her face that Mr. Vordenberg detected at once. "Richmond is so lovely, and the scenery is all new to me. Fond as I am getting to be of London, I found it delightful to see fields and trees once more. And such trees ! We had nothing like them at Silverdean."

"Trees !" Mr. Vordenberg repeated. "What would you think of the vast forests of oak and pine through which I used to roam in my youth ? There was no brushwood under our great trees, and one might wander at will about their huge trunks, and rest under their shade in the heat of noon. And in winter, when our moon was at the full, shedding a broad clear light upon the snow-covered branches, you could see the icicles gleam like diamond pendants in the wide woods ! And you might hear the merry sound of bells and laughing voices, when the sledges, with their gay trappings, came sweeping through those sparkling glades. A poor region it was, perhaps ; but there the young grew up happily and safely together, and became fair women and brave men."

"Where were these forests ?" Beatrice asked eagerly. "I would give the world to see them."

"Know'st thou the land ?" he said, with a light in the deep, dark

eyes that were fixed on hers. And she knew that, like the child Mignon, he would say no more than this.

At this point of their conversation—just as Vordenberg was studying her earnest face, and thinking how fresh and pure it was—there came a sharp knock at the door.

“Come in,” he answered ; and Beatrice noticed the weary look that crossed his features as the door opened and a man entered.

The new-comer was spare and grey-haired, and had a general air of being half-crazed and half-starved. This was Miss Ward’s first impression of him ; and she shrank a little timidly from his glance, which was not gentle and penetrating, like Vordenberg’s, but angry and suspicious. He seemed, she fancied, to take her presence as a personal offence ; and she gathered up her music, and moved quickly away. But Mr. Vordenberg, with his graceful courtesy, attended her to the door, and received her simple “Good evening” as if it had been the parting salutation of a princess.

“Who is that girl, Casimir ?” asked his visitor, in a sharp, irritable tone. He did not speak in English, and his tongue might have sounded harsh in English ears. But when Vordenberg answered him, in the same language, it became rich and soft and full of strength.

“I am teaching her to sing,” he replied quietly. “She lives here, under the care of the people who keep the house ; and they are, as you know, good people, Michael.”

“But what do you want with her, Casimir ? It is not for you to seek the society of young women ; and these English girls have not hearts of gold as our women have. They are cold, and slow to feel, and full of selfish thoughts and frivolities. You should let them go their way, and devote yourself, with all your soul, to the great cause ; your country and her wrongs should never be absent from your mind, even for a single moment !”

He still spoke in his sharp, querulous tone ; and Vordenberg turned towards the open window, and looked thoughtfully at the rosy evening flush that was dying away above the house-tops.

“Of all men living,” he answered mournfully, “I am the least likely to forget. Nay, if I strove to banish the past, the face of that young girl would bring it all back again in an instant. Have you not guessed the reason why I take so strong an interest in her, Michael ? Her shape, her voice, her smile, do they not constantly recall to me the aspect of one who is now a saint in Heaven ? This evening, while we were singing together, it seemed that Sofie must have sent me this Beatrice to sweeten the bitterness of my lonely life. Perhaps she sees, that sweet saint, that it is not good for a man always to be brooding over his sorrows in solitude.”

He spoke in a musing tone, still looking away over the roofs, and standing near the open window. But his companion had begun to pace the floor with quick, uneven steps, swinging his arms,

and casting a wild look now and then at Vordenberg, as if he hated the unbroken calm of that sad face. And presently his words poured out fiercely, like a torrent let loose, and the veins on his forehead stood up like cords. In those few seconds of walking and thinking, he had lashed himself into one of the ungovernable rages which are the result of nursing old wrongs.

"You are becoming a dreamer, Casimir," he cried harshly. "Has the time come for beating the sword into a plough-share, and sitting down tamely to sing love-songs with strange women? What have you to do any more with the sweets of life? The only sweet that you can ever taste is that of vengeance."

But Vordenberg quietly shook his head.

"The Lord," he answered, "does not always see fit to deliver our enemies into our hand. He has taken from us our Fatherland, and it is not His will, Michael, that we should strive to win it back by assassinations and infernal machines. Let us wait, let us be patient. Even although the Muscovite triumph, his day of reckoning is sure to come."

"Out on you!" shouted Michael in a fury. "The fire is dead in your heart; you are sinking into a dream of ease, and false peace, and selfish security. I would that your noble father could rise from the dreary grave where he sleeps, and kindle the flame in your breast once more! Pillaged, hunted, banished, stripped of everything that you loved and prized, you are tamer than a beaten hound when you talk of waiting!"

He paused, exhausted by his own violence; and Vordenberg answered him with calm patience.

"The spirit of patriotism is not dead within me, Michael, but I know that the hour of our people has not yet come. My father (Heaven rest his soul!) would counsel resignation if he could speak to us in these present days. Think how many plots, carefully planned and warily kept, have ended in the utter ruin and misery of the plotters! There has been enough good blood shed vainly in our cause; why, then, should we waste any more? Believe me, my friend, that submission is the only course that is left to us now."

"It is a course that I will never take," muttered Michael, savagely.

"There is but one other road, Michael—the road that goes to Siberia; and it is already strewn thickly with the bodies of brave men."

Again Michael Stavieski began to pace the room, his features working convulsively, his eyes shining with a fierce light. Vordenberg's calmness irritated instead of soothing him.

"We ought never to dream of submission or resignation," he went on at last. "The true Pole knows not the words: for him they do not exist, and never have existed at all. In the life of the real patriot there is no rest—no ignoble content. I blame you Casimir; I shudder at you, because you can be contented!"

"My contentment is a very imperfect thing, Michael. If I am

now at peace it is because I can never suffer again as I suffered once. As to my joy, that, too, was done with long ago."

"Man, I hate your apathy; I would move Heaven and earth to kindle one spark of sacred fire in your heart! Look back on the past—behold again that familiar street in Warsaw where certain bold men had attempted the life of the detestable Berg! See the savage devils forcing their way into the house that contained *her*; see her face, that pure, lovely face, as it appeared for the last time at the window of an upper storey. Could men endure such a sight and live? Her clothes were torn, her bright hair hung all wild about her head, the blood was streaming from her fair neck; two soldiers—hell-hounds—forced her back into the room. And this was what the Muscovites called their divine vengeance!"

Once more he paused, breathless, and almost worn out; but this time there was no reply to his wild words.

Without a groan, without even a sigh, Vordenberg had dropped heavily on a couch that stood near the window. His head had fallen back on the cushion of the sofa; the eyes were closed, and the face, always pale, now wore the marble whiteness of death. Stavieski, impatient at his continued silence, drew near, and was horror-stricken by the aspect of that colourless face.

"I have killed him," muttered the unhappy man, wringing his hands. "I have killed my best friend! And yet, the saints know that I meant only to revive the dying flame; I did not dream that his heart was so weak! Casimir, my brother; what have I done?"

He lifted Vordenberg's hand, but it fell helplessly to his side again. There was no movement; no sign of life; and Michael, in an agony, looked round for some means of restoring consciousness. Springing to the side-board, he seized a carafe, and began to bathe the marble forehead with water, muttering incoherent lamentations the while.

Very gradually the look of life returned to the still features; the eyes slowly opened, the lips parted, and Vordenberg sighed softly. He looked up; shuddered from head to foot, and shrank away from Stavieski's eager touch.

"Sit down, Michael," he said feebly; "I am all right now."

But Michael still hovered over him, frightened and repentant; and his presence seemed to annoy and irritate his friend.

"Sit down." This time the tone was imperious. "I know I have fainted, but that is nothing; it has happened to me once or twice before. You will do well to go away, Michael; I do not want you here any longer to-night."

"Do not send me away," pleaded the other piteously. "Let me stay and watch by your side till morning! It is my fault, all my fault, that you are ill. I ——"

"Be silent," said Vordenberg sternly. "I am not ill, and I desire solitude. Go, Michael."

The man rose, humbled and subdued; the wild glitter had died

out of his eyes, and his haggard face had a strangely gentle look. He went to the door, and then lingered.

"Casimir," he said meekly, "if you will let me stay, I will not say another word about Poland. I will even try to forget the Muscovite. We will talk of music—of pictures—of this girl who has become your pupil—of any subject that does not give you pain. But if you send me from you now, I shall pace the street all night; I cannot rest; I cannot forgive myself for what I have done."

The blood was welling up again under Vordenberg's pale skin; the brightness had come back to his dark eyes; and although he still looked indescribably weary, the faintness had entirely passed away. He cast a compassionate glance at poor Stavieski (standing at the door with an abject bearing which contrasted strangely with his former demeanour), and then spoke in his usual quiet voice:

"My poor friend," he said, "I wish to Heaven that you could indeed forget the Muscovite, not only for an hour or two, but for the rest of your natural life! Stay with me a little longer if it will make you any happier, Michael; but I am tired, and I shall go early to bed."

Stavieski was greatly relieved by the kind permission; he came back to a seat near the window, with something of the manner of a big, rough sheep-dog just pardoned by its master, and gave an audible sigh of satisfaction. It was now eight o'clock, and Vordenberg touched the bell and asked for a lamp. The smart page who answered his summons looked a little inquisitively at the shabby visitor, and Stavieski was sullenly silent while the lad was in the room.

"Why does the boy steal glances at me?" he inquired, when the page had gone downstairs again. "He always stares—does he suspect me of anything, I wonder? He is young, but not too young to be a spy."

Vordenberg laughed slightly.

"Still harping on the old string, Michael," he said. "William is a good boy, as boys go; and he certainly has not the making of a spy in him. If he stares at you, my friend, it is because you don't look exactly like other people, that is all."

"Ah, I have changed more than you have, Casimir! And you are a handsome man still, although you are nearly fifty. Yet you, too, are altered; your hair and beard were nut brown when you escaped from Warsaw three-and-twenty years ago! But what am I saying? I promised, did I not, to talk no more about Poland?"

"You are incapable of keeping that promise, Michael; I release you from it," Vordenberg answered with a smile. "Go on, and talk of old days, if it pleases you."

"They were full of life and stir, those old days!" said Stavieski, gladly availing himself of the permission. "We kept up our hope to the last, and even when hope was gone, we had our pride left. Ah, Casimir, your escape was wonderful; I think you must bear a

charmed life ! How marvellously you prospered in Vienna ! And those Vordenbergs — how affectionately they received you and cherished you for your father's sake ! And yet it is hard, cruelly hard, to remember all your losses."

"I have done with remembering them. My income amply suffices for all my needs."

"But there were the jewels—the jewels that your father prized so much, and your dead mother used to wear. Did you ever hear what became of them ? Do you not know that the day after that diabolical outrage, a dragoon stood by the Church of the Cross and sold one string of pearls after another for two silver roubles each ? Do you not know that ——"

"Hush, my friend," said Vordenberg ; "you are treading on forbidden ground. I did not give you leave to lash yourself into a fury again, when I told you that you might speak of old days."

Stavieski's eyes had begun to shine with a wild light once more, and his hands were trembling violently. But he made a strong effort to compose himself.

"Yes, yes ; I understand you, Casimir," he replied. "I will not excite myself. See, I am quite calm now ! Still there are certain things that one is always longing to say. Did I tell you that I had seen Worowski ?"

Vordenberg fixed his eyes on the speaker with newly-aroused interest. "Where did Worowski come from ?" he asked. "It is long since I have heard of him."

"He has come from Paris. Ah, how lean and hungry he looks !"

"They all do," murmured Vordenberg, sadly.

"Yes, that is too true. Well, he told me some news. You remember the Lorenski family who suffered with us in the good cause in 1861. One of them, a girl, was taken under the wing of the accursed Gradizoff, and trained up to be a spy. Think of it, Casimir—a Lorenski ! She, the young traitress, lived with the Gradizoffs ; and after the Count's death, she came to England with his English widow and daughter. But she did not stay with them very long ; she went back to St. Petersburg, and from St. Petersburg she went to Paris. It was there that Worowski saw her, and kept a watch upon her doings as well as he could. We ought to know our enemies. She is very handsome and still young, but not quite so young as she appears to be. And she has taken the name of a rich man, old enough to be her grandfather ; but whether she was really married to him, Worowski could not tell."

"Ah," said Vordenberg indifferently. "It does not matter to us if she takes fifty names ! Poor child, I think she cannot have a single relation left. But about Worowski—is he indeed very poor ?"

"Very poor," Michael repeated. "He is looking about for something to do, but it is hard to find work. I will help him as well as I can."

"You need help yourself." Vordenberg's glance was full of the

gentlest pity as it rested on the worn features before him. He rose, unlocked a desk, and put money into his friend's hand.

Stavieski murmured his thanks in a broken voice; and then, seeing that his benefactor looked pale and tired, he prepared to depart.

"Good night, Casimir," he said. "May the saints have you in their keeping!"

"And you too, Michael; and Worowski. One word more—do not talk too much with Worowski about our wrongs. And above all avoid any of those foolish plots which are sure to end in defeat. Good-night."

The door closed, and Vordenberg was at last alone.

For a little while, he sat with his elbows resting on the table and his forehead supported by his hands. Once or twice a strong shudder shook him from head to foot, and a deep groan broke the stillness of the room. He could not lose sight of that fearful vision which Stavieski had called up from the past.

At length, after many a bitter pang, the sharp agony began to subside, and he remembered that *her* suffering had been brief. The future, brightened by the glory of an intense faith, seemed to offer him that sublime guerdon which is the highest hope of a lonely soul. A pure spirit, free from every earthly fetter, was watching for his coming in an everlasting home.

He took a miniature out of his bosom, and looked long upon the sweet, girlish face of his dead love. And while he gazed, a light footstep was heard going up the stairs, and a fresh young voice sang softly:

"Know'st thou the land? 'Tis there! 'Tis there!"

CHAPTER X.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

THE rest of the summer glided peacefully away, bringing few changes to Beatrice and her friends.

In August, Harriet carried her off for three weeks to the sea-side, and brought her back again in freshest bloom. In September, they had one or two trips to Richmond. On these excursions Godwin Earle went with them, and there were quiet walks and talks under the old trees, and golden hours upon the river. The girl was wonderfully happy in these days; no one made love to her, but love was in the atmosphere that surrounded her. She felt no anxiety about the future now; it was enough for her that Godwin's eyes followed her constantly, and when he spoke to her his voice took its softest tone. Moreover, he seemed to have that power of knowing her likings and wishes that only love can give. Tact may do much; but affection alone can have the subtle gift of reading the desires that are unexpressed, and always reading them aright.

There were two men to whom she was daily becoming dearer and dearer. Godwin Earle, working hard in his City office, found the toil grow sweet under her influence, and knew that her little hand had guided him into the sunshine. Being a bright and eager spirit, she could scarcely help leading the darker and slower souls with whom she walked through life. And yet she led unconsciously, as many of the best leaders do.

The music lessons were going on steadily; but Beatrice sang better than she played. Hers was one of those full, fresh voices that seem to lend themselves best to old-fashioned songs—songs which are associated with the ripe and vigorous beauties of an older time.

"The lark now leaves his wat'ry nest," would peal out, clear and strong, from her red lips; and the notes made you think of morning skies and dewy fields, and a bird's early hymn to the rising day. Melancholy modern ballads she very seldom attempted; to her healthy taste they seemed sickly and tame. And Vordenberg encouraged her to sing "immortal verse wedded to immortal music."

Over and over again it has been proved that the gravest teachers and professors cannot give lessons to their fair pupils without a certain amount of danger. Let a man and woman come together in frequent and intimate association, and strong feelings spring up unawares. Abelard and Heloise; Cadenus and Vanessa; and scores of less celebrated names, bear witness to the perils of this peculiar relationship. Nor is that relationship much less dangerous when the master is old enough to be the father of his pupil. The paternal names, naturally caressing, prepares the girlish mind for the demonstrations of the lover.

If Beatrice had come to Vordenberg with an empty heart, there would have been a different ending to his life-story. But she came to him with all her thoughts and all her sympathies absorbed by another man.

Yet for Vordenberg she had sweet looks and grateful words; just such looks and words as a girl may give in all innocence to "her dear master," not knowing that to him they are a delicious poison. And he, finding his lonely life filled with tranquil sunshine, began to dream, almost unconsciously, of a renewal of his youth. In this bright girl his lost Sofie seemed to live again. Sometimes a sudden glance, a trick of speech, recalled her so distinctly, that he felt as if he loved the living woman for the sake of her resemblance to the dead.

In October, when the squares were full of yellow leaves and the first fogs had begun to blot out lingering sunbeams, Mrs. Wyville and her children came back to Bruton Street. And Beatrice set about her new work with a determination to make the best of it.

It was not, after all, such a terribly trying work as Harriet had expected. The duties were troublesome; but who does not know that even dust-grains are glorified in the sunlight? A happy heart

infuses something of its own joy into the most irksome tasks ; and Beatrice was too well contented with her lot to make much of its small nuisances. The children loved her ; their mother loaded her with tokens of goodwill ; and even Mrs. Milton was obliged to admit that things were turning out very well.

All the wheels ran so smoothly, and everyone was so perfectly satisfied, that Beatrice began to feel the old Puritan fear of too easy a path. She told Godwin Earle that if everything went on so evenly there would be a danger of spoiling the governess. "I shall never believe any more in the persecuted governess of modern fiction," she said. "Nobody tries to drag me into family rows ; I have made no enemies among the servants, and I have never had a single snub."

"But you forget that the novelist always introduces a grown-up son," said Godwin. "Or else the pupils have a widowed father. Whenever the governess is persecuted, it is because she is a dangerous siren. Mrs. Wyville's household happens to consist entirely of her own sex ; a fact which has a most tranquillising effect on my mind !"

"I'm sure I should know how to keep grown-up sons and widowers at a distance," she declared, putting on a haughty air to hide a blush. "They wouldn't dare to approach *me* !"

"Ah, child, I think there is nothing on earth that a man would not dare to win you !"

The month was December ; the time half-past four in the afternoon ; and the place was that brown-and-red sitting-room which Beatrice had always liked so well.

The pair were alone. Harriet had gone out on a Christmas shopping expedition, and was expected to return in a state of exhaustion, with heaps of parcels, in a cab. Mr. Milton was spending a few hours with a friend ; and Godwin, perfectly aware of the absence of these lawful guardians, had joyfully seized his opportunity. The tea-tray was on the table ; the fire blazed merrily, and the lamp-light brought out all the warm colours of the pretty room. Beatrice had laid aside mourning, although she still wore a black gown ; and there was a bright crimson bow at her neck. She sat near the tea-tray, looking so charmingly domestic, that Godwin suddenly lost his head, and said a great deal more than he had intended to say.

He had meant to wait until the three thousand pounds had been paid to the Countess Gradizoff, and he was free from the odious burden that was always pressing on his mind. When that load was cleared, away he could ask the Miltons to sanction his love, and openly propose to Beatrice. But, if a man means to delay his declarations till a convenient season, he is scarcely wise in seeking every chance of being alone with the girl he loves. And this quiet room, warm with lamp and fire, invested her with an atmosphere of homeliness which had an irresistible influence.

His last words had set her nerves quivering. But she sat quite

still, and made no effort to break the silence that followed them. That was one of those momentous pauses which always precede a heart's revelation.

It was a very brief pause. Harriet's clock on the mantelpiece had only ticked away three seconds when an arm stole round Beatrice, and a well-known voice began to murmur old love words over and over again. A thousand times she had pictured a scene like this, and it must be confessed that she felt as if she had been through it all before. And yet it was a great deal sweeter than any dream.

"My darling," said Godwin, softly, "I meant to have waited a little longer—ever so much longer, perhaps! But you will forgive me, Beatrice? It was so hard to go on working without telling you how much I loved you. You are not angry with me for speaking?"

She was not angry, and she managed to let him know that she was not. With the first touch of her lips, the last sad thought of the past faded completely away. He could realise now that life is sometimes kind, that love is sometimes crowned, even in so uncertain a world as this.

So the quiet room in the London house was transformed, just then, into an earthly paradise; and Godwin gave himself up to the bliss of this second love. And in spite of all that has been sung and said about a first affection, it can scarcely be denied that the good wine is often kept till the end of the feast; and he who drinks it finds it richer and stronger than the earlier draught.

Even when his love for Alma Lindrick had been deepest, he had always known that she demanded many things besides that love. In his sanguine days, all those things had seemed easily attainable, and he had expected to lay honour and wealth at her feet. But later on, when the hopes had dwindled away one by one, and the world had turned its back on the disappointed man, he had felt the need of that love which is content with love alone.

"Ah, Beatrice," he said, "this makes amends for all that I have suffered. An hour like this is worth living for!"

"You were so tired of life when I knew you first," she whispered.

"Because I did not know what good things life could give. I did not know what it was to have won a heart like yours."

"But, Godwin, did you never win any other heart?"

"I thought I did; but I don't think so now."

"Was it—was she—did you see her that night when we went to the Lyceum?"

"Yes," he said, a little astonished at her quick perception.

"And again, when we dined at the Star and Garter?"

"Yes; I did not think you had noticed her, Beatrice. But it matters very little whether we meet her or not. I never loved her as I love you; and she could not love as you can love."

It was a perfect answer to any doubting questions that might arise

in her heart. And afterwards, when her faith was tried, these words lived eternally in her memory, and helped to strengthen and confirm her trust.

"I think we ought to tell the Miltons everything," she said, after a happy pause. "Harriet is really a mother to me, you know; and I hate concealments. Besides, it would hurt her if she were not perfectly trusted."

"You could not have a better guardian," Godwin answered warmly. "And this is a safe home for you until I can take you to another. I wish you would give up the teaching—I don't like it, Beatrice."

"Why not?" she asked, with a mischievous light in the blue eyes. "Are you a little bit proud? Or do you think there is any fear of the grown-up son appearing from some unknown quarter?"

"I *am* proud, I suppose. I want you to live a life of happy idleness until I can claim you."

"But idleness is never happy if it lasts too long. Dear Godwin, let me go on working in my own way, and promise not to set Harriet upon me. I know she would make me give up my pupils if she could."

"Then why not give them up, little woman? What makes you hold to your purpose with such fierce determination?"

"Do you really see anything fierce in me?" Her face was dimpling with fun. "You had better find out all my bad points before it is too late. Make haste and make some more awful discoveries."

He kissed her, and laughed with her; but he returned to his question.

"Well, I really love work of almost any kind," she said seriously. "And I don't think it would be good for a girl of my temperament to live in a lazy dream of delight. Besides, I am getting quite fond of Mrs. Wyville; she treats me as a friend, and I could hardly leave the poor children without a good excuse."

"I will give you a good excuse for leaving them as soon as I can," remarked Godwin with quiet resolution.

"And after all," she went on, "we may be glad, some day, that I went to that house in Bruton Street. I can't help feeling that it is well for me to know the Wyvilles."

There was such earnestness in her manner that Godwin did not press the matter. He let the subject drop, little thinking that the words she had just uttered would seem, later on, to have been something like a prophecy.

The sound of Harriet's latch-key reminded them that they must behave like ordinary people again. And when Mrs. Milton entered, followed by William, staggering under a load of parcels, Miss Ward was demurely filling the tea-cups, and Mr. Earle was standing on the hearth-rug with his back to the fire. They both looked so

perfectly easy and unconcerned that Harriet suspected nothing, and began at once to relate the wonderful history of her adventures.

"Of all the unpleasant duties that fall to my lot, an afternoon's shopping is the worst," she declared. "Just before Christmas, all the shop people go mad, and sell everything that you don't want and nothing that you do. And they mix up their trades in such a ridiculous way that one's brain gets quite confused. The draper entreats you to buy boots and shoes, cheap dolls, and pots and vases of all descriptions; the grocer bores you with packets of cards and good little books; and you come out of their doors with your head in a whirl. And altogether the Christmas things are so preposterous, and so dreadfully numerous, that I feel exactly like Alice after she had been through the looking-glass."

"Drink some tea, Harriet," said Beatrice; and Godwin dutifully handed a cup. "There is nothing like tea for clearing the brain. Now that I look at you, I see that you are not quite as trim as usual; your bonnet is a little awry, and you have the air of one who has passed through strange experiences."

"Oh, Beatrice, I hope there is nothing singular in my appearance!" cried Mrs. Milton in alarm. "I met our doctor at the door, and had a word or two with him; but it was too dark for my bonnet to be noticed. Ah, I see you are laughing at me, as usual! And now that I look at *you*, I find that you are not in the most perfect order. Perhaps it is the fashion to wear a red bow at the side of the neck!"

Beatrice dropped a spoon, and she and Godwin dived after it together, and were lost to sight under the table-cover. It was strange that a shining thing, such as a tea-spoon, should be so difficult to find in a well-lighted room; and Harriet wondered at the protracted search.

"If you are going to spend the evening in grovelling on the carpet," she said severely, "I shall ring for William."

They came up, rather hot and guilty-looking; Godwin with the spoon in his grasp; Mrs. Milton eyed them both with a lofty air of disapproval, and sipped her tea in silence.

Suddenly remembering that he had promised to dine with old Corder, Godwin quietly took his leave, and went out with such a contented face that Beatrice could not help looking after him with a smile. The two women were alone together; and Harriet was the first to break a rather ominous pause.

"I almost fancy, child," she remarked, "that *you* have been through the looking-glass this afternoon."

"Yes, Harriet, I have," said the girl, plucking up sudden spirit. "Don't begin to scold me; of course I meant to tell you all about it as soon as he was gone."

"He ought to have spoken to me first," said Mrs. Milton, bridling.

"He is going to speak to you by-and-bye. He—he thoroughly esteems and admires you, Harriet," replied Beatrice, diplomatically. "He says I could not have had a better guardian. And, oh, you dear old thing, we are both so very happy that you must forgive us!"

Rare tears were glittering in the deep blue eyes, and Mrs. Milton's heart told her that this happiness could not be quite complete without her sympathy. She had satisfied her sense of propriety by being dignified and severe; and now she came quickly down from her pedestal and held out loving arms to her favourite.

"May you be very, very happy, my darling," she said, tremulously. "Never was there a love-affair with a more romantic beginning! I was not quite sure whether it was going to be love or friendship; but Richard was right. He was always certain of the end."

"Do you think he will be pleased, Harriet? And Mr. Corder, what will *he* say?"

"I can answer for them both. They will be delighted. Does that satisfy you?"

"I am more than satisfied," said Beatrice, drawing a deep breath.

Harriet had untied her bonnet-strings, and thrown off her furred mantle, and was sitting in a low chair by the fire, looking oddly dishevelled and excited. Beatrice had drawn a low stool to her friend's feet, and was resting one arm on her lap.

"What a long sigh!" said Mrs. Milton, passing her hand fondly over the curly head.

"Harriet," the girl asked suddenly, "does happiness ever frighten you? Have you ever been afraid that all your good things were being poured out at once, and that there would be emptiness by-and-bye?"

"No, dear." The elder woman spoke thoughtfully. "My good things have come to me slowly, one by one; there never was an out-pouring. And—and I don't think I ever was as happy as you are now."

"Not as happy as I am! Is mine, then, an uncommon kind of joy?"

"No, child; there is, thank God, a great deal of such honest, natural joy in the world; and there would be more if people were true to their own hearts. But I had a chilly girlhood, and my relations always stood between me and the sunshine. They were harsh and cold, and nipped my feelings in the bud; and so I grew up thinking of myself as one of those 'Pale primroses that die unmarried.'" Late in life there came a sober kind of happiness and unexpected prosperity. That is my history, Beatrice; but it is not like yours."

"Not in the least like mine." The girl sighed again. "I wish I could talk to someone who had been just as wonderfully glad as I am now. I want to be told that great bliss is not always short-lived; that is all."

"Don't be afraid to rejoice. If God sends us good, He means us to enjoy it to the uttermost," said Harriet. "Why spoil a sweet draught by fearing that there may be bitterness at the bottom of the cup?"

Beatrice looked up with brightened eyes. Harriet's homely wisdom had done its work, and she was comforted.

"Do you know what time it is?" cried Mrs. Milton in a startled tone. "It is six o'clock, child, and dinner will be ready in half an hour. Here we are, sentimentalising by the fire, with rough hair and untidy gowns! And after dinner, there is your singing-lesson to come!"

Just then, Mr. Milton came in, saying that it was dark and bitterly cold out of doors; and Beatrice ran upstairs to her own room. But, instead of proceeding at once to brush her hair and set her dress to rights, she went to the window, and stood looking out into the thick gloom of the winter evening.

How many miseries were hidden under that foggy curtain of darkness! How many hearts, grown weary of the long struggle for existence, would give their last throb before the sun arose again! Her own happiness seemed to make her keenly alive to the unhappiness of others; and never had she felt a more passionate desire to comfort and help the crowd of sufferers around her. She was so safely sheltered—so fondly loved—what had she done to deserve such a wealth of blessedness?

She was turning away from the window, when the soft sound of a harp met her ears. A practised hand swept the strings, and drew out of them that sweet unearthly melody which always seems as if it drifted to us from another sphere. And then came the mellow voice that she knew so well:

"Love has met us on the road
When the heart is faint and sore;
Love, that lightens every load,
Gilds the path that lies before;
Will it go, or will it stay?
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

Love has made the roses grow
Where the cruel thorns were found;
Love has made the fountains flow
Over dry and thirsty ground;
Will it go, or will it stay?
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

Earth has many foes to love,
Watching with unkindly eyes;
And the saints that dwell above
Bid it spread its wings and rise;
Will it go, or will it stay?
Who can say, ah, who can say?"

"Oh, I wish the song had not such a doubting tone!" she thought, hastily brushing the tears from her eyes. "How can I dare to rejoice if those words are always echoing through my brain?"

But when, a few minutes later, she entered the sitting-room, and Mr. Milton met her with outstretched hands and smiling lips, the torturing fears were driven away.

"Harriet has told me the news," he said. "Heaven bless you, my child, and make you as happy as you deserve to be. I have a strong liking for Earle; he has a true heart, Beatrice."

Mrs. Milton came down to dinner still a little fluttered, and pressed Beatrice, with such tender anxiety, to eat something nice and keep up her strength and spirits, that the watchful William wondered what terrible trial was in store for the poor young lady. And Beatrice, in laughing at Harriet's little fidgety ways, almost forgot those vague forebodings that had shadowed her spirit a few minutes ago.

She was hardly in the right mood for taking a singing-lesson, but Mr. Vordenberg was waiting for her upstairs, and a certain subtle instinct told her that he would be pained if she failed to keep her appointment. Not that she had ever fancied his feeling for her was deeper than the affectionate interest which a middle-aged man may safely take in a young girl. But she knew that his life was lonely and sad, and suspected, too, that he was perpetually haunted by memories of a brighter past. And it was good for him, she thought, to be gently wiled away from sorrowful recollections.

Her light knock was instantly answered, and as he stood, holding the door open for her to enter, she was struck by the intensity of expression in his eyes. She had always thought Mr. Vordenberg a singularly handsome man, but to-night he was handsomer than she had ever known him yet. The long, oval face, with its delicate, but noble features, and soft dark eyes, was lit up with a subdued joy, which gave it an indescribable beauty. And although the hair, that lay in close-cropped curls over the fine head, was silver-white, he looked, this evening, wonderfully young.

"I have something against you, Mr. Vordenberg," said his pupil, half seriously and half gaily. "You have almost saddened me with your plaintive little song."

(To be continued.)



FIFTY YEARS.

THIS generation knows thee but in part,
 Beholding what thou art ;
 And not as we, who, as we backward gaze,
 Can see, through Time's soft haze,
 The fair girl-Sovereign of our early days.
 Who saw thee through the streets of London borne
 In triumph on thy Coronation morn,
 And heard the City musical with chimes
 That hymned thy bridal ; who, in later times,
 Rejoiced with thee on that auspicious day
 When the bright sun of May
 Saw thy loved Consort victory achieve,
 And Peace wear laurels War could never weave !

And time went on, and sunny skies grew dim,
 And trials thickened round thee, and round him.
 War, sickness, famine came the land to move
 From slothful ease to watchfulness and love ;
 Faction was won, and prejudice lived down ;
 Disaster turned to increase of renown.
 The Church awoke to labour and beseech
 For the lost thousands, drifting out of reach ;
 Stretching her tents to take the weary in,
 Storming the citadels of want and sin ;
 Luring the heathen to their Father's home
 By saintly lives, and deaths of martyrdom.
 While bold Invention, privileged at length
 To search the treasure-house of nature's strength,
 Launched the swift car that distance could not tire,
 Painted with sunbeams, wrote with heav'nly fire,
 And powers no chain could bind, linked peacefully with wire.

And still thy work was done,
 Though vanished, one by one,
 The friends and servants of thine opening reign.
 Prince, prelates, matchless hero, statesmen tried,
 All faded from thy side ;
 And one, more precious still,
 Sent, by the Father's Will,
 Thy youthful steps to guide, thy strength sustain—
 That Will in turn removed :
 Leaving the name beloved,
 That to thy people's hearts can never speak in vain.

The sevenfold blessing of the Jubilee
 Abide for ever on thy Throne and thee ;
 And o'er thy sceptre brood, when needed most,
 The Dove of PENTECOST !

ANNA H. DRURY.



ALICE HAVERS.

“‘SURELY ’T WAS A SOUND I HEARD.’”

THE
SUMMER NUMBER
OF
THE ARGOSY.

THE DEATH-CARD.

A TRUE STORY.

I.

"SUPERSTITIOUS, not I ! but
I'll never tell a fortune again ;
I've done too much harm already
with my horrible juggling."

"My dear fellow, pray explain
yourself ; but it seems to be a
painful subject."

I checked myself as I observed
a fleeting expression of real pain on
my companion's face. He was a
recent friend of mine, and was dining
with my wife and myself at our little
cottage on the river near Marlow. He

had been introduced to us some months
earlier by a mutual acquaintance, and we found
him so very sympathetic and entertaining a com-
panion that we elevated him very shortly to the

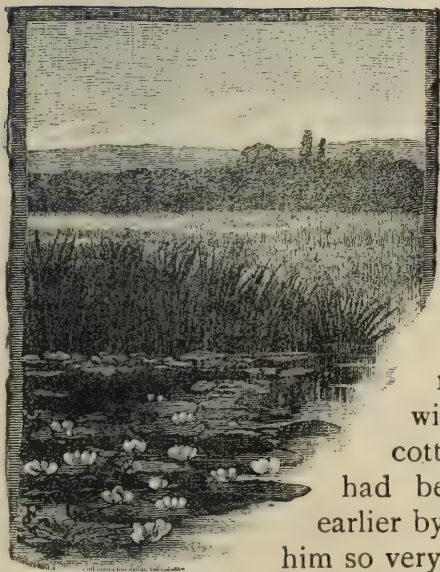
position of a friend of the house.

My wife was delighted with him. He had been a great traveller
and had dabbled a little in every science. The bent of his mind
was, however, far more superstitious than sceptical, although this was
an imputation he would vigorously deny.

We also knew him by reputation to be a master in the arts of
palmistry, and other branches of divination, but he would never be
prevailed upon to exhibit these accomplishments.

My wife, who was young and delighted in novelty, was constantly
imploping him to "tell" her hand, or, better still, her fortune by the
cards, but hitherto her efforts had been in vain.

This evening she had been at the poor man again, and at length



her persistence (for she was not used to being thwarted) had roused him to unusual warmth, and he had spoken the words with which I began this little recollection.

Seeing that he appeared really pained and almost agitated, I rushed in to the rescue.

"I know the style, Trafford," I cried, "and I don't wonder that you sneer at it all, now I see through it also, and am up in all the dodges. Give me your hand, Mary," turning to my wife, "and I'll tell you your character at once."

My wife extended her hand laughingly. "Well, you certainly ought to know something about it," she said.

I turned her palm to the light with mock seriousness, and proceeded glibly: "Jupiter," I said impressively, "slightly dominates this hand."

"I'm sure it's very obliging of him," laughed Mary.

"He gives you your irreverent nature; Apollo your love of art."

"Oh, bother my love of art," said she; "pass on to other things."

"Well, then, as to looks, it's all the same, I assure you nothing is accidental. Your skin, for instance, owes its pallor to Venus and its fugitive blushes to Mars."

"Or Bloom of Ninon," put in Mary.

"But it is Mercury," I continued, "you have to thank for the vivacity of gesture, the vivid flash of the eye, the eloquence of your voice. Mars has dowered you with that retroussé nose and that ironical upper lip. In short, you are a barometer of changing feelings; but Mercury renders charming these caprices of the moon."

"Stop! Spare us, George. You are running on like an eight-day clock. He does not tell me to what star I owe the misfortune of having married such an idiotic person; does he, Mr. Trafford?" she added, rising from the table and leaving us over our wine.

For some time we laughed and talked on indifferent subjects. Then suddenly Trafford turned to me.

"Clavering," he said, "I am afraid your wife thought me rather bearish just now."

"Not at all," I replied, as in duty bound. "I told her hand instead of you—so it came to the same."

"Yes, you were kind enough to joke off my bad temper and strong language, of which I am quite ashamed; but the fact is, George, I own to you I *do* believe in those things, and I also think they are better not meddled with. Experience has taught me ——"

"Thereby hangs a tale, perhaps," interrupted I.

"Hardly a tale, but a recollection, and a most painful one. Shall we smoke our cigars in the garden, Clavering, before I go and make my apologies to your wife, and I'll relate to you of the last time I told a fortune by the cards."

I could hardly forbear smiling at the earnestness with which he spoke of that absurd imposture, "card-reading;" but I suppressed

this inclination, and took him under the trees by the river, and we lit our cigars, as he had proposed.

It was a fair, calm summer's evening, and on the dear old Thames the moon had made that bright chain that Byron sang of, and that I, too (who am unpoetical), love to watch as it catches new glints of shadowy brightness with each gentle movement of the water beneath it. At length Trafford spoke, and I listened to the following tale :—

Two years ago I was in Cairo. It was December, and the place was full. What a town that is ! One meets there a shoal of European friends, and yet obtains as genuine a peep at Eastern life as could be got anywhere.

I was sitting on the verandah at Shepherd's hotel one evening, feeling rather dull. The place was full, but I had not yet seen many people among the residents there whom I knew. Still it was amusing enough to sit there and observe the different people passing in and out. First there came an official in precise black coat and regulation fez ; then a young soldier in a line regiment, his dark uniform only cheered by a suspicion of red ; and again, he was followed by a more brilliant staff-officer.

One by one they passed me by as I sat in the shadow of the hotel verandah ; and growing weary of the shifting panorama, I rose and betook myself to the railings which overlook the street below. It was growing dark, and in the East, as everyone knows, this is a sudden affair, twilight having barely come ere night is upon us.

As I leaned upon the railings, I suddenly fancied some region of darkness, was upon me. Close to me, in the street, rushed by a motley crew of dancing Arabs, waving flaming torches and uttering discordant outcries.

They seemed to be dragging a cart or vehicle of some kind in their midst as they came along. I turned to my neighbour, an olive-coloured youth, who, I fancy, was a native of the place.

"Would you tell me what on earth they are doing?" I said. "Have they all gone mad?"

He smiled. "They are welcoming back the pilgrims from Mecca," he replied. "You must get accustomed to the noise, I fear. It will continue all the evening."

True enough, as he spoke another mass of human beings rushed by. More strange notes of gladness sounded on the ears, and lights flashed red amidst the gloom. "It is a great occasion," I observed.

"Certainly," answered the olive-coloured youth ; "a pilgrim to Mecca has secured his salvation."

He spoke in French, and as he turned from me he made the Eastern salutation, which consists in raising the hand rapidly and touching the mouth and forehead. It is a graceful action, and its intention is to raise the dust at your companion's feet in an oriental affectation of humility, and press it to lips, brow and heart.

As soon as I was once more alone, I was startled at feeling a hand laid heavily on my shoulder. I turned suddenly and saw an old companion's face.

"Guy!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, old fellow," replied Sir Guy Kenyon, heartily shaking me by the hand. "I've unearthed you at last. I caught sight of you in the 'Shoubra' to-day, but you didn't see me. I'm uncommonly glad to see you again."

"So am I to see you. I was getting tired of my own society. Cannot we dine together?" I added quickly.

"Certainly, Mark, but—by the way, I must tell you I'm—I'm on my honeymoon."

"You don't say so. I haven't seen a newspaper for ages. I'm sure I congratulate you, and beg your pardon at the same time for forcing myself upon you. Of course, now——"

"Nonsense! Nonsense!" cried Kenyon. "Of course I'm tremendously in love and all the rest of it; but we've been married three weeks and shall be glad to have a visitor. And besides, I want you to tell me what you think of her."

"What, not satisfied?" I exclaimed.

"Satisfied, indeed! My dear fellow, she's an angel. I'm the luckiest man ——"

"Of course, of course—in the world," I interrupted somewhat hastily. "Let me finish the sentence for you. Very young, I presume? Where did you meet? In town?"

"Yes; she is only eighteen, but the best of it is she has never been to London, and is as simple as ——"

"Exactly, a daisy: that sentence also is not difficult to finish," I laughed.

"Confound you, Trafford," said he, good-temperedly, "you're as envious as possible. But wait until you see her. Where did I meet her, do you say? Why, in the country. By Jove, there she is."

He rose and approached a young lady who was issuing from the door of the hotel, and I followed him with my eyes as he did so. She was wrapped in a long plush cloak, as after twilight in Cairo all sensible persons take a wrap. And, indeed, she was *most* beautiful; fair and tall, with delicately cut features.

I wondered no longer at Kenyon's adoration. Yet, somehow, when she drew nearer to me and accepted a chair after an introduction had been effected, I took a dislike to her, and I cannot exactly say why.

Her voice was soft and sympathetic, and her smile exceedingly sweet, but her eyes were curious. They were like those of some hunted, miserable animal, in their expression; for the rest, they were grey and very large, though they did not readily meet my own, but were nearly always cast down.

I dined with them, and in the evening Sir Guy, by way of drawing

me out, I suppose, proposed that I should exhibit my favourite accomplishment, and tell his wife's fortune from the cards.

I excused myself, saying I did not yet know Lady Kenyon sufficiently.

"That's the very reason. You know nothing of her, so it's an excellent test for you. Besides, Claudine does not believe in it, and I want you to convince her."

"Are you then an unbeliever, Lady Kenyon?" I asked.

"Yes, I suppose I am; but I am open to conviction. Pray give it a trial, if you have your cards about you."

Finally I consented, saying as I did so, "I warn you I always speak very plainly, and say exactly what I read on the cards. It may be unpleasant. If you are superstitious, do not try it."

"But I told you I am not so," she said. "Besides, Guy seems to wish it," she added.

"Reason enough for a bride," I smiled. "So be it."

Guy at that time happened to be called away; and saying he would return to hear the result, he left us together.

How I remember that time! Would to Heaven I had never meddled with destiny. I spread the table in the approved fashion for the reading of the cards. As I did so, Lady Kenyon exclaimed at their peculiarity.

"They are the best for this sort of thing," I said. "I got them at Geneva, as this particular pack is forbidden in London and in France. They were invented by Mademoiselle Le Norman, whom I dare say you have heard of."

"They are very uncanny. What does that coffin mean?"

"That," said I, "is called 'The Death-card,' and if it be found in certain positions relative to other cards, it conveys the gloomiest prophecy."

I contemplated them as they rested like an open book for me to read, and never had I seen them so fatally plain and so fearfully ominous.

Presently I raised my head. "Now I will begin. Remember I merely repeat what I read. Firstly, you are twenty-five years of age."

"Wrong to begin with," she said. I looked up and was startled to see how she had changed colour.

"Perhaps I had better stop; I see nothing pleasant," I said gravely.

"Pray continue, Mr. Trafford," she returned, with a sharp tone in her soft utterance which was unusual to it. "I am much interested, although you have given me six years in advance of my age."

I had returned to the reading. "You have a secret," I continued quietly, "and if it long continue one, it will bring great disaster upon you. I see a life of constant dread, and a slow and subtle malady of the mind ——" Here I paused.

"Go on; you know I do not believe in it," she said, and I did not

notice at that moment the strangeness of her voice. "What do you see further?"

"Well, then, I will continue. Remember it may be averted by frankness; but what I see is ominous. Observe the lay of the cards. These symbolical pictures can show you to a certain extent the meaning, though more depends upon their relative positions to each other; for a card falling in one place would be comparatively harmless if surrounded by auspicious cards, while elsewhere, and with other companions, its meaning would be fatal. So is it here. This key represents your secret. This cross the absolution which by confession you might gain, but you turn from this. See these two winding paths, they signify a double life ——"

An exclamation startled me; and raising my head, I perceived Sir Guy, who rushed forward and supported his wife in his arms. She was pale and faint; and, hiding her face on his broad shoulder, she sobbed hysterically.

Kenyon stormed at me vigorously, as he held water to her lips, for terrifying her with my absurd nonsense.

I did not defend myself or offer any but the most slender of apologies. I had seen more in those cards than I had revealed, and this knowledge had filled me with dismay.

I felt a conviction of its truth, which so saddened me that I could hardly contemplate the inevitable future with calmness.

On her recovery, Lady Kenyon treated the matter lightly, begging my pardon very prettily for her agitation. "But really, Mr. Trafford, your manner was so impressive," she added.

Kenyon, I fancied, still looked coldly upon me, and I therefore took my leave as speedily as possible. On returning to my rooms, I again "told her cards," which is done by simply concentrating your thoughts upon the person whose fate you wish to learn.

"Again that ominous combination, always covered by the Death-card," I muttered. "Am I a fool to believe in that sign?"

I could find no answer to this question; and after shuffling them together, I sought my bed.

I saw little of the Kenyons after that day, and rightly concluded that I had offended Guy by my awkward earnestness, which I knew had been singularly inappropriate.

The next occasion of our meeting was the Khedive's ball, an important and interesting function which no visitor who could obtain an introduction would have omitted to attend.

Amongst others, I also drove up at ten o'clock to the brilliantly lighted square of the Abdin Palace, and presenting my invitation to the official at the door, was permitted to enter.

It was the etiquette to appear in full dress, and I had therefore donned my militia uniform, which, in anticipation of such an occasion, I had brought with me.

The rooms were long and most luxuriously furnished; but feeling

lonely, I passed listlessly through them to the ball-room, where I came upon the Kenyons. Guy was in the uniform of the 1st Life Guards, to which he belonged, and his wife was pale and beautiful in white from head to foot.

They greeted me with greater cordiality this evening, and informed me of their intended departure the following day; and then Guy turned away to claim Lady A——, wife of the British Consul, for the square dance which she had promised him.

Lady Kenyon and I were left standing side by side.

She looked wretchedly ill, and the outline of her delicate cheek seemed thin and worn, while her hands and arms, and her whole appearance, denoted an exceeding fragility.

"Shall I take you from the ball-room?" I enquired politely. "It is hot and fatiguing, unless you care to dance."

"No, I am not up to dancing, Mr. Trafford. But I wish to say a few words to you, if you can think of any place where we shall be undisturbed."

Feeling somewhat surprised, yet with a dim presage of what was coming, I led her to a small, almost deserted, room situated near the conservatory. From our point of vantage, we could hear the soft ripple of the adjoining fountain there, and see the couples passing between long lines of bending palm-trees, but we were practically alone.

My companion seated herself on a yellow satin sofa and toyed nervously with her fan of large white ostrich feathers, growing paler and paler ere at length she spoke.

"Mr. Trafford, we have seldom met, yet I think I can trust you."

A curious feeling of pity came over me which swept away my previous dislike. "You may do so implicitly, Lady Kenyon," I replied.

"I am impelled to make you a confidence to-night, and I cannot overcome the impulse."

"I would advise you to do so nevertheless," I replied; "but again let me tell you it shall be sacred."

She was silent; then a convulsion passed over her countenance. "The other night," she said, "you remember my fortune—and all you told me."

"It was but little of what I saw."

"But that little was true, absolutely true. Mr. Trafford, I am an unhappy woman; my life is a web of deceit. Tell me, am I doomed? Is it to be always so?"

I looked at her amazed as she went on.

"I love my husband passionately; he is faultless to me; but I *cannot* confide in him. I was poor and lonely when he married me, and every day his character grows more dear. But deceit—ah, that he would never understand. Heaven help me——"

"Lady Kenyon," I returned kindly, "say no more. You may, on reflection, regret these words to a stranger."

She looked at me dreamily. "Are you a stranger? Can you be?"

No ! No ! you know my fate. Tell me—tell me, what will become of me ? ”

“ You attach too much importance to what, after all, is but a game of chance,” I said, speaking against my own convictions to soothe her ; “ and the sight of your distress has cured me of the wish to tear aside the veil which hides the future. I shall tell no more fortunes, Lady Kenyon. Forget that I ever attempted to read yours.”

I can still recall the sad smile with which she answered me.

“ I may, perhaps, forget the speaker,” she said, “ for something tells me we shall not meet again, but the truth of your words is more difficult to banish.”

As she closed this sentence, she rose with pathetic dignity. “ One last question, Mr. Trafford,” she murmured, “ and I implore you to tell me the truth. Was my—my—*death* foretold in their prediction ? ”

“ It was.”

II.

A YEAR ago I met Guy Kenyon again at a country house to which we had both been invited for some shooting.

He seemed well and moderately cheerful. To the questions concerning his wife, which, after some inward trepidation, I asked him, he replied that she was at one of their places, distant about twelve miles from our abode.

“ But I trust it was not indisposition which prevented her coming ? ”

“ Oh, no,” he replied. “ That is to say, she is as well as usual. But I am sorry to say she has become somewhat of an invalid, and the doctors recommend great quiet. We cannot quite fathom the cause of the change in her lately, and it causes me serious anxiety. You cannot imagine how nervous she has grown, poor child ; she can hardly bear me out of her sight. I assure you,” he added, drawn out by my look of interest, “ that even the parting for two days was almost more than I could accomplish. She sobbed so pitifully, and clung to me in a way that melted my heart.”

“ It is very flattering,” I observed.

“ And yet it worries me,” replied Kenyon, “ for the doctors tell us exaggerated emotions usually proceed from an unhealthy mental organisation.”

“ Women’s ways,” I replied, “ are outside the canons of science.”

“ Well, that may be ; but I am generally uneasy about her, and she is always in my thoughts. I think I shall make some excuse and get back to her. Ah, Trafford,” he continued, “ how I love her. I am as great a slave as ever. There is nothing in this world I would not give her.”

“ Or forgive her,” I said, almost before I was aware the words had escaped me, wishing she could hear the manly tenderness which breathed from his words.

“ Or forgive, of course,” he added, with a slight accession of

hauteur, which made me see how stern his handsome features were capable of looking. "Happily, however, she does not need it. All the forbearance is on her side."

Then he changed the subject as if chilled by my remark. Yet in spite of this, we resumed much of the friendliness of old days, which somehow his marriage had seemed to dissipate; and I think we both realised there is no tie so hard to forget as that link which has been forged by old association, although it is the one we oftenest attempt to set aside in favour of later loves and younger companions.

The following morning, as after breakfast Kenyon came somewhat wearily down the broad staircase, I approached him, and was struck with his pale and haggard features, lit up by the morning sun, which streamed cheerfully into the old-fashioned hall.

"You look tired," I exclaimed.

"Tired! I feel it," he replied, drawing near the fire and slightly shivering.

"Anything wrong?" I said gently, for the expression of his face was unusual, and he seemed altogether unstrung.

He rose from his seat and took a few restless turns. "I have dreamed a dream, Mark," he replied, laying one hand on my shoulder as he paused for an instant at my side.

Something in his depressed tone and his employment of my Christian name touched me. "Tell it me, old fellow. I'm a dreamer of dreams, myself."

"I mean to tell it you," he said, "but not here. Come out; we'll talk it over in the garden."

I assented; and we left the house and wandered in the grounds.

There was nothing conducive to confidence in the stiffly-arranged parterres in front, and we strolled about in silence. But I knew of a pleasant retreat less generally sought after and more secluded, and thither I conducted my downcast friend, who seemed still trying to conquer some hidden agitation. This retreat was, I believe, a whim of some former châtelaine, whose tastes were more rustic than those of her family, for it was a copy of an old-fashioned garden, bright with pinks and hollyhocks, pansies and mignonette, and containing a low seat, towards which I steered. Kenyon and I seated ourselves, and then for some time there was silence, which somehow we neither of us seemed to be able to break.

"What is it, Guy?" I said at length. "You've something on your mind, I know."

"I'm a confounded fool," he said shortly.

"Well, confess your folly. Don't let us always be conventional in this miserable world. Sometimes we find its maxims are not enough to counsel us; in that case we must look further afield," I replied.

"Mark," said he, "I'm upset by a dream; only a dream, old fellow, as I told you a little while ago; but so horrible and so vivid, I am completely under its spell. I could not have believed such a

thing would affect *me* so. I've never given way to that sort of nonsense, as you have."

"What was it about?" I enquired quietly.

"Ah! that's it, Mark. It was about the only creature who has the power of agitating me so deeply."

I leaned forward, and almost involuntarily the words came from my parted lips.

"It was about your wife?"

"It was," said Kenyon, "and I will tell it to you, Mark. You're the queer sort of chap that understands these things," he went on, and as he did so all trace of colour left his cheek. "I dreamt I was asleep, and that Claudine came to me, pale, desperate-looking, haggard; as I have never seen her; as I pray I may never see her. She wrung her hands in mute entreaty at my side; she wildly appealed to me to help her, to save her; and I couldn't tell what she wanted. I strove to reach her, and I failed. A sort of insensibility seemed to come over me at this point, and the dream faded. I know not how long it was before I returned to the semi-consciousness of dreamland, but when I did so, I saw my wife again. Mark, she was standing near me, as before; but she was not pleading, as she had formerly done, and her expression had undergone a change; it was wilder and more resolute. I watched her, fascinated. Slowly she drew forth a curious and beautifully-wrought dagger, of Italian workmanship, and I saw her, as plainly as I see you, plunge it deep into her heart. I woke up cold and agonized, and I cannot rid myself of the idea that she is in trouble."

I attempted a smile.

Kenyon turned almost solemnly towards me. "I know the dagger," he said; "it is in my room at home."

"Guy," I returned gently, endeavouring by the absence of all argument to check a kind of wildness I observed in his manner, overwrought as he was with anxiety and the effort to disbelieve in the reality of its cause; "don't fight against this nervousness any longer. Go back to Lady Kenyon. Ride over and make some excuse to the good people here. Satisfy yourself immediately. What is there to prevent it?"

He rose with a gasp of relief.

"I will," he said; "I will. I would have done so an hour ago; but I *wouldn't* give in; I wouldn't believe in it."

He was turning away, when I laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Guy," I said, while the colour rose to my cheek, "one more word of advice: trouble may come to all, whether foretold by dreams or no. If it should in any shape come to your door, don't act rashly—be patient—be forbearing."

He shook off my hand with a haughty gesture, and left me with one surprised glance and with no word of farewell.

I went back to the house in about an hour, and made what excuses

I could for his departure, which were needed, as the servants had reported having seen him galloping down the avenue, and he had left no word of apology or of farewell.

"Really a *very* peculiar proceeding," remarked our hostess, Mrs. L——, "but he has been so uncivil lately; completely changed since that absurd marriage of his."

"What, are they unhappy?" asked one of the guests.

"No; I cannot say *that*; but there was a mystery about the whole concern. Who was she? and why did no one ever hear of her before?"

I escaped from their comments and conjectures, and sought solitude. I was anxious—yes, absurd as you may deem it—I was racked with anxiety about those two. There seemed an ominous atmosphere around them, in which I felt also enveloped. Yes, there seemed a link between us, and I was convinced that it was forged with the elements of a tragedy.

I became so filled with this idea that at length I too determined to shake it off by the evidence of my own eyes; to follow Kenyon to his home and ask his hospitality for an hour or two, and thus gain assurance of his well-being and that of his wife.

Then I would leave them, and dismiss this weight of needless care. Despatching a telegram to Guy, I gave the genuine explanation to Mr. L—— of my departure, and alleged my belief that Kenyon was nervous and out of health, and that I wished to ascertain that he was not seriously unwell.

Mr. L—— cordially entered into my anxiety, and furthered my plans by sending me over in a dog-cart. I knew the way, as I had often been to the house in the old days, and I drove the fresh little mare through the narrow lanes bright with summer's leafy splendour.

The warm air fanned my face, and the scent of new-mown hay came faintly to me on the gentle wind. I strove to find pleasure in the sights and sounds around me. "After all, what are they to you?" I said to myself: "why concern yourself about them?" And yet I urged on the pony, and thankfully watched the distance decreasing.

At length the grey pile of Kenyon Abbey met my eyes, and I entered the avenue; a few turns more and I saw it closer; and as I did so my heart gave one mighty throb. Each window was tightly closed; each blind was drawn down.

I rang at the door-bell, and the echo of my peal seemed to mock me with its hollow reverberating clang. After the space of some seconds, counted easily by the beating of my heart, the door was opened and an elderly man appeared. I knew him of old; he was their butler.

"Can I see Lady Kenyon," I said, falteringly. I dared not ask her fate in any other manner.

"You do not know, sir?"

"Know? Know what? Tell me."

"Her ladyship died at noon."

I turned away. Wherefore should I stay now.

Suddenly a detaining hand was laid on my arm.

"Mr. Trafford, sir, will you not come in?"

"At such a time? Impossible."

"I know you are a friend of Sir Guy's, sir," said the man respectfully but firmly; "and I do think someone should stand by him until his mother comes to-morrow. You see, sir, it's—it's enough to turn his brain."

"Yes, indeed, the terrible loss ——"

"And the way he lost her, sir ——"

"How?"

"I had better tell you, sir, in case you see Sir Guy. Her Ladyship, sir, she—we think she must have been out of her mind—she died by her own hand."

He heard I was in the house, and late that night he asked to see me. I entered his room as reverently as though it were a church. Indeed, I hardly dared approach him. He came forward and spoke to me in a dull, toneless voice and with a quiet, collected air.

"I wished to see you," he said, "because I have a message for you?"

"For me."

"Yes, from—from—her."

"She spoke of *me*," I muttered, while a kind of fear oppressed me; "and to you?"

"She never spoke to me," he rejoined almost fiercely. "There was no time. Ah, Heaven!"

For a moment his agony overcame him, then conquering it by a mighty effort, he motioned me to a seat. "Mark," he said, "no words of this shall ever pass my lips save where necessity compels, but you in some strange way are connected with it, and therefore there are one or two things I wish to tell you. I have only to-day learnt from her diary—and—other papers, the story of her life, and in it I see among other facts that *you* appear to have had a singular conversation with her at Cairo."

"I had."

"I also see," he proceeded, in a dull, level monotone, while he tightly clenched one hand as though forcing the words from himself against his will, "that this conversation had a great and terrible effect upon her. By some coincidence you spoke words which seemed to her to bear a dreadful stamp of truth, and you weighted her distempered imagination with some hideous prophecy."

"Guy, forgive me. I ——"

"Don't speak, please. There are one or two things I wish to pass over as hastily as possible. I imagine from what I read of your con-

versation, as reported in her diary, that she made you some vague confession—am I right?”

“You are.”

“It’s these words of hers, Trafford, I wish to explain, and to make you understand that, over-excited as she was, she misled you—and she wronged herself.”

“I know she did,” I said, touched to the heart by his face.

“There *was* a secret between us,” he went on, “but I know all now; and I tell you, Trafford, there was nothing I would not have pardoned, nothing that need have been a bar between us. But it weighed upon her mind, and it undermined her health. Each time I left with a loving farewell, she dreaded to read estrangement in my eyes on my return. This time her agony reached its height. I read in the pages of yesterday’s entry, written before she died, that she had had a dream that night; a dream in which I knew her story and I would not forgive. Unnerved by this, she must have been standing at the window, trying, perhaps, to subdue her fears, when she caught sight of me galloping up the avenue, heated, disordered and pale. Imagine the effect upon her. ‘He knows all,’ she must have argued; ‘never, *never* will I read doubt and loathing in his eyes.’ Quick as thought the terrible impulse—a woman’s agony of dread and her desperate courage—close at hand the terrible weapon. All I saw when I entered the room was my wife, my love, dying at my feet.”

Kenyon paused, his self-possession gone; and hiding his face on the table, he gave way to deep sobs.

I dared not attempt any consolation, but at length he raised his head, and drawing a small packet from his bosom he handed it to me.

“It was found in her desk directed to you.”

I opened it fearfully, a small picture met my eye, designed and coloured evidently by the hand of an expert draughtsman.

It was an exact copy of the Death-card.

“And now,” said Guy, “leave me alone—alone with the memory of my short, bright dream, and my horrible awakening.”

I left him, and about six months ago I heard of his death.

He had left the Guards some time previously, entered another regiment, and fell fighting in Zululand. But of Claudine’s end, I never knew anything but what he told me, and with him died his wrongs, whatever they may have been, covered to the last by the sacred pall of silence.

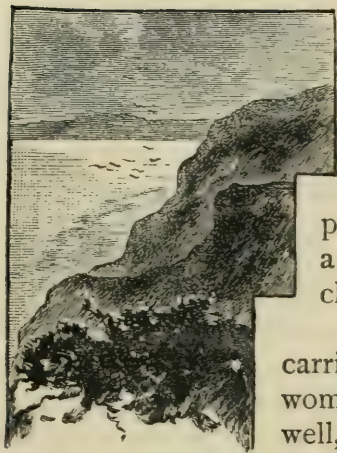
So Mark Trafford ended his narrative; and when he had finished he turned to me, and I saw a tear glistening in his dark eye.

“Come in, old fellow,” I said, “to the lights and the music; Mary shall sing to you, and charm away these sad thoughts.”

He rose. “Yes, we will go in,” he replied, “and thrust the sorrows of this world aside. If we forget them for a moment, I suppose that is all we can hope to do.”

PHILIP FANSHAWE'S WIFE.

I.



ONE bright June morning passers-by saw the doors of the Church of St. Aidan swing open, and perceiving a kind of ecclesiastical bustle amongst the officials, they came to the conclusion that a wedding was to be seen if they had a little patience. So those who could spare time, and a great many who could not, went into the church, all agog for the sight.

Presently there was a rumble and rattle of carriages, as the guests began to arrive; the women in all sorts of bravery, which they carried well, and the men with that languid, bored air Englishmen feel it their duty to assume on all festive occasions. A murmur goes through the crowd, that a bishop's nephew is to tie the knot, and this gives such a flavour to the affair that when the bridegroom arrives, he is looked upon as being of quite secondary importance.

He is well worth looking at, nevertheless, being a handsome, well set-up man of about five-and-thirty; but it is not until another murmur has circulated to the effect that he is "rolling in riches" that he attracts much attention.

Then a halo of sovereigns seems to surround him, and people begin to find out his good points, and comment on the luck of the bride.

She comes soon after this, and as the eager and not over polite crowd crane forward to stare at her, she flashes one glance of supreme disdain at it, and then relapses into cold indifference. No shrinking, blushing bride this. She scarcely touches with the tips of her fingers the arm of the man who is leading her up the aisle, but walks with head erect looking straight before her, with eyes that see nothing. She is very beautiful, and has a wealth of red-gold hair, which catches every stray sunbeam; but her face is too white; and in spite of the warm day, she looks as though she were cold.

Her mother eyes her stealthily, and with a carefully concealed anxiety. The bride's father is dead, and it is a distant relative who has volunteered for the occasion to stand in his stead.

The dearly beloved who are gathered together in the face of this congregation seem to have only one thought in common about the matter, and that is, that it is a splendid opportunity for criticising—in a perfectly well-bred way—the gowns of their friends. The dearly

beloved are divided into two camps. One side is clothed in beautiful, soft, clinging Liberty draperies of exquisitely subdued tone; the other is stiff with steel and wadding, pinched in here, and bulging out there, its hair coiled in plaits round the head, and ending in a mad touzle on the top; while the heads of the opposition are a mad touzle all over. One side silently calls the other "Philistines," and the Philistines call the others "Lunatics."

The only person who is really impressed with the solemnity of the words the Priest is saying is the bridegroom, and he listens attentively. Will he love this woman, comfort, honour and cherish her in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others keep only unto her, so long as they both shall live? Aye, that he will. There is no doubt about the fervency of his answer.

And the woman? She utters her assent in a listless and apathetic fashion; but this may be only the effect of nervousness.

The bishop's nephew gives his sermonette amidst the admiring glances of the congregation. For although he is a flat, flabby young man, with fluffy whiskers, over which he spends many of his leisure moments, endeavouring to train them like his uncle's, which are black and bushy, still there is a kind of reflected apostolic light upon him in consequence of his near relationship to so celebrated a dignitary of the Church. Then it is all over, and Philip Fanshawe and Madeleine Jervis are man and wife.

They walk down the aisle to the strains of the "Wedding March," and drive away amidst the freely uttered remarks of the crowd. The bridesmaids and attendant cavaliers being next disposed of, the rest of the company sort themselves somehow, are packed into the carriages and driven away in their turn. As the congregation is slowly dispersing, and the verger, beadle and pew-opener are counting their tips with that complacent expression which speaks volumes for the manner in which the "best man" has construed the orders of a generous bridegroom, a hansom dashes up to the church gate, and a man almost throws himself out of it, he is in so violent a hurry. He rushes up the steps nearly into the arms of the clerk, who is standing in the doorway.

"Is the wedding over?" he asks, hastily

The clerk surveys him with displeasure.

"Of course it is," he answers, crustily.

The stranger stands quite still, and looks at the clerk as though he were responsible for the marriage. Then he draws a long breath, and says:

"I should like to see the register."

The clerk leads him through the church to the vestry, and opening a safe, takes from it a book, which he opens at the last entry.

The stranger looks at it, and reads the names aloud. "Philip Fanshawe—Madeleine Jervis;" then the names of the witnesses, concluding with a hearty anathema on all parties concerned.

The clerk is scandalised, and says "Sir!" in a tone of remonstrance.

"I beg pardon," says the gentleman, with a dry smile, and giving the man a liberal fee, he leaves the church, and re-enters his hansom.

"Something up!" thinks the clerk. "It strikes me, if that gent had only been a little earlier on the scene there would have been no wedding this morning."

Meanwhile, the wedding party had driven to the house of the bride's mother. It was in a gloomy London square, still possessing an aroma of greatness sufficient in the minds of its inhabitants to quite counterbalance the gloom. The arrangements at No. 53 were perfect, as everything undertaken by Mrs. Jervis was bound to be; but all the same, this did not prevent the groomsman thinking, as he looked at the bride: "Yes, you are very lovely, but, by Jove! when I marry I should like my wife to take a little interest in her own wedding, and not look as though it had nothing to do with her." And while he was talking nonsense into the pretty ear of one of the bridesmaids, some fragments of club gossip came into his mind.

"I am rather sorry for Fanshawe," someone had said. "For a fellow who likes to take things easy, he couldn't have gone to a much worse shop for a wife."

"I thought Madeleine Jervis would never marry; she was so infatuated with Jack Borlase," said another.

"A live donkey is better than a dead lion, and Jack being no more, why, Vive Philippe!" answered the first. "Not that I mean there's anything of the ass about Fanshawe, except, perhaps, in this instance."

"I suppose it has been the work of Mamma Jervis," interpolated a third.

"Why didn't she marry this Borlase?" asked a new-comer.

"Because he was no end of a detrimental, and hadn't a copper. Jack went the pace till there was a crash; then he went abroad, caught a fever, and died."

"And a good thing for Fanshawe, too. Those Jervises are a wild lot."

"Miss Jervis looks like a woman with a buried heart," here said a youngster of a romantic turn; and, in spite of the laughter which followed, it certainly was not a bad description, thought Mr. Falconer as he watched the bride.

She looked in an entirely unmoved manner at all and everything, smiled at the right moment in a chilly fashion, appeared perfectly cool, and, on the whole, rather bored. Fanshawe was not a demonstrative man himself, so that he made no marked contrast to his wife's iciness.

Mrs. Jervis, however, could not help the triumph which she felt at having landed so good a fish from peeping out occasionally, even in

the midst of her affecting regrets at losing the best of daughters, her only companion, etc., while she very carefully—for fear of disturbing the Bloom de Ninon—wiped an invisible tear from her eye.

The breakfast drew to a conclusion, the bridegroom delivered himself of a few well-chosen words, the groomsman made a speech neither better nor worse than dozens of others, and sat down feeling very hot and uncomfortable, convinced he had made a fool of himself; and the bishop's nephew had delivered a long tirade of nonsense in his pulpit voice, and sat down very complacent and self-satisfied, convinced that he had *not* made a fool of himself: which was true in one sense, for nature had already done it for him.

Then Mrs. Fanshawe retired to put on her travelling dress. Escaping from them all, her mother included, she sank into a chair, in her own room, and gave a sigh of relief. At this moment her maid approached her with: "If you please, ma'am, there is a gentleman in the library who has called on particular business. He says——"

"Absurd, Parsons! They should have told him it was impossible."

"Yes, ma'am; but he wouldn't go, and said you would be very angry if his card was not given to you, as soon as you left the table."

Madeleine took it up impatiently. On it was engraved the name of a stranger to her, but underneath, written in pencil, she read in German characters: "From Jack Borlase."

The card dropped from her hand to the ground, and a low cry broke from her lips, which were white as death.

"I will be back directly," she said hastily to her maid; "mind everything is ready." So saying, she hurried from the room, and made her way to the library. She stood for a moment, with her hand on the door before she opened it. There was a strange fear upon her; a feeling of expecting she knew not what; and it was with almost a movement of desperation that at last she flung the door open, and entered the room.

The man inside turned his head, and looked at her without a word.

Then she gave a cry, and put out her hand, as though thrusting something from her.

"You did not expect to see me," he said, coldly, looking at her with a steely glitter in his blue eyes.

"Expect to see you! I thought—they told me you were dead."

"You are acting very well, Madeleine," he answered, with an evil smile; "but you always were a good hand at theatricals. It won't go down now, though."

She had been standing all this time, holding the handle of the closed door, against which she was leaning as if for support. Now she moved nearer to him, and said:

"Jack, don't look at me like that; don't speak to me like that. They told me you were dead. And do you know what I have done this morning, dear, only two hours ago?"

"Yes," he answered "I know what you have done, and there is

no need to go on with this comedy. You had my letters ; you knew the report of my death was a lie ; but as Mr. Fanshawe had money and I had none, you found it convenient to believe it."

"Your letters !" she cried, bewildered. "What letters ?"

"What letters !" he echoed, impatiently. "Those I wrote to you from Melbourne."

"I never received one. From the day I read in the newspaper of your death, I have heard nothing either of or from you till now."

"If this be true, then there's treachery somewhere ; and by Heaven some one shall suffer for it."

"Indeed, indeed, it is true. Why did you not come back sooner, Jack, to save me ? It is too late now ; all too late," she wailed.

"You were soon consoled for my death," he remarked, dryly.

"You are cruel ; you do not know what I have suffered. My mother has lost nearly everything through a speculation she would make in spite of all advice. Her health is thoroughly broken, and the doctors say that nothing but freedom from care and anxiety can keep her alive. She has a dangerous heart disease. Knowing all this, when Mr. Fanshawe asked me to marry him, and she urged me with every persuasion she could think of, how could I refuse ? It seemed the only way out of our difficulties. And I thought you were dead—and nothing mattered much."

The anguish in her voice was too great to be assumed, and the hardness faded from his face.

"My poor Madeleine," he said, taking her in his arms. And she, with her bridal dress still on, and her vows of fidelity to another man still fresh on her lips, forgot him for the moment as completely as though he did not exist, for Borlase's power over her had regained all its old strength.

"But how is it that you are safe after all ?" she asked him.

"After I left England my ill luck followed me as usual. During the voyage I got a fever, and was put ashore at Aden in an almost dying condition. How the report of my death got about I don't know ; but at any rate it was months before I recovered sufficiently to continue my journey. I wrote to you when I was well enough, and again on reaching Melbourne ; and after I went up country, every time I could send a letter to the post I did so. Getting no answer, I could bear the suspense no longer, and started for home. I only arrived in London late last night, and, in answer to enquiries, was met this morning with the news of your marriage. I hurried to the church, where I arrived too late, or I would have parted you at the very altar. And now I must know what has become of my letters. Who told you I was dead ?"

"Someone showed the newspaper notice to my mother, and she brought it to me."

She was sitting down now, watching him with a wistful, wretched look on her pale face, as he strode up and down the room.

"Did you know Fanshawe then?" he asked.

"Yes, I had known him for a little while."

"Of course," he cried, stopping in front of her. "Of course; that explains it all. It was a planned thing between him and your mother that my letters were to be kept back and you were to suppose that I was dead. He may even have put the notice in the paper, for all we know."

In any case but her own, the monstrousness of such an idea in connection with Philip Fanshawe would have struck Madeleine directly; but put to her in a tone of conviction by Borlase, she accepted it as a proven fact.

"No doubt," she said, bitterly. "How else could it have got there?"

"Well, they have played the game; now they shall pay the reckoning," said Borlase, savagely.

His anger was terrible to see. A man who had never learnt self-control; who had never denied himself anything in his life, be the cost what it might; he was at this moment, when he found himself thwarted in what was for the time being the object of his existence, more like a madman than a sane creature. But what woman sees the faults of the man with whom she is in love, and Madeleine was completely carried away in the whirlwind of his passion.

The sound of an opening door recalled her to herself, and she started up.

"I shall be missed," she said. "Let me go, Jack."

"Let you go to the man who has robbed me of you, by fraud? No, you shall come with me, now as you are, and ——"

"Go with you? I cannot. I dare not."

"Think of all I have suffered; of how I have worked and waited, only buoyed up by hope; think of my coming home to find that hope a mockery; think of my lonely days, with no companionship but that of the roughest men; my long nights under the stars, when your face always came between me and them; when I would have staked my life and soul on your fidelity—am I to find it all a fool's dream? Remember how you vowed to wait for me, no matter how long. You cannot cast me aside now for this man. He has bought you with his money, let him buy his freedom with it also. You are not his wife, but mine, promised to me two years ago, and I hold you to your word."

"You frighten me, Jack. You know what you are saying is impossible. I dare not face the world ——"

"The world! what has it to do with either of us? It ruined me, and turned its back when I had no more to give it. It has sold you like a piece of furniture, or a dog, or a horse, to the highest bidder. We owe it nothing but defiance."

"Whether we defy it or not, it always proves the stronger in the end, and you would soon see that I am right."

"Right to go to the man who has bought you—right, with hatred in your heart for him, and love for me!"

Mrs. Fanshawe's lips quivered as she answered in a voice which betrayed the strong effort it cost her to speak calmly.

"I am not going with him. I have been tricked and deceived, and I declare that as he has made me suffer, so shall he suffer. But neither am I going with you. We must part now, and for ever."

"No," he cried, flinging his arms round her; "not for ever."

Before Madeleine could free herself from his embrace, the door opened, and her husband came into the room. His face was set and stern, but he betrayed no surprise, or showed any emotion. Speaking quite coolly, he said:

"Mrs. Fanshawe, will you get ready for our journey at once, as I have no wish to lose the train. While you are changing your dress I will speak to this gentleman—Mr. Borlase, I believe."

Borlase turned sharply towards him, and before Madeleine could speak, answered roughly:

"If you are particularly anxious to catch your train, you had better start; but Madeleine is not going with you."

Fanshawe turned away from him with a look of unutterable contempt.

"What does this mean?" he asked his wife.

"It means that I know now how you and my mother plotted to deceive me, to make me believe that Mr. Borlase was dead. You knew I loved him long before I met you, for I told you so, and I would have gone to him if he had been a beggar, had I known he was living."

"I know nothing of any plotting to deceive you: this is all new to me."

"That is false."

The words were scarcely out of Borlase's mouth before Fanshawe's hand was on his throat.

"You hound!" he cried. "You creep in here with accusations to poison my wife's mind, to ruin her peace, and blast my honour. Unsay your words or I will kill you."

They were both strong men, and well matched, and as they swayed to and fro, in a close and silent struggle, with eyes full of a determined purpose, they both forgot the presence of the woman who was looking on. While Madeleine was standing paralysed with terror, the door again opened, and her mother appeared. Directly she saw the struggling men and recognised Borlase, she forgot everything in her sudden fear, and for once in her life was perfectly natural and regardless of consequences. She uttered a terrified scream which brought servants and guests quickly into the room.

Falconer and another man hastened to separate Fanshawe and Borlase, while Mrs. Jervis was entreating her daughter to give some explanation.

"I understand now the deception that has been practised, and I will never forgive you, mother, or see that man again," said Madeleine, in a hard, unnatural voice, as she pointed to her husband.

Mrs. Jervis looked at her daughter, as though she were stunned with dismay. The terrible scandal, the utter ruin staring her in the face, were too much for the wretched, scheming woman. She tried to speak, but no words came : there was only an inarticulate sound in her throat : and the next moment she fell lifeless to the floor.

II.

MADELEINE JERVIS had never been a woman of many friends. "I don't believe in friendships," she had openly avowed. "If your friend be a woman, she will try to take away your lover, marry your brother, or flirt with your husband ; if a man, he will either want to marry you, or else be afraid that you want to marry him." So, in spite of her large circle of acquaintances, she was really quite alone.

Proud, and contemptuous of the world's opinion ; that world which she knew so thoroughly, with all its hypocrisy and Pharisaism ; she had only very slight threads to hold her back from overstepping those bounds to which, for a woman, there is no return.

One thing which held her was the horror she felt at her mother's terrible death ; and, although she would never have forgiven the wrong she had done her if she had lived, and did not forgive her even now ; still, the dead woman had a power over her which she would never have possessed living. Another thing was her own pride, and a feeling of helpless, hopeless despair which had taken hold of her—a sense that whatever she did would end in misery, and the knowledge that whichever path she took she would always regret the untrodden one.

Her husband she had refused to see, and, until her mother was buried at least, he would not insist upon an explanation. But he did not know the strength of her will, and found, when too late, that what he had taken for the outburst of an angry woman was become a fixed resolve. After the funeral, when he returned to the house determined and firm, she was gone. The servants were discharged, and the house was in possession of a caretaker, who was unable to give him any information whatever. He next went to the late Mrs. Jervis's solicitors, with whom he was well acquainted, thanks to that lady's keen eye for business in respect of settlements.

They had received a letter of instruction from Mrs. Fanshawe, posted in London, but giving no address, and stating that she would either write or call when she deemed it necessary. After a week's fruitless search, Fanshawe did what he should have done at first—employed a private detective. Of course, he had to give the man an outline of the case ; and he, judging human nature according to his lights, and going by the knowledge gained in studying only its worst side, wasted many weeks in pursuing Mr. Borlase, without the slightest result. That gentleman was as much in the dark as to Madeleine's whereabouts as Fanshawe himself, though, like him he was making every effort to find her.

His worst enemy might have pitied Fanshawe now, had he but known what he was suffering. The cruellest sting of all was to be suspected of a share in the miserable, threadbare plot of the scheming woman, who had wrought so much misery. No wonder, believing this, that Madeleine hated him; and he saw clearly that he should never be able, even if he found her, to undeceive her, so complete was the power Borlase had over her.

Fanshawe had always been a cold, somewhat cynical man, asking nothing from, and believing little in human nature. Experience had taught him that most men and women had their price; and as he was one of fortune's favourites, he had generally contrived to get what he desired. As for love, he had simply laughed at it all round; to him it was a species of lunacy, and "your doting love-sick fool, who merely his lady-love to please, sun, moon and stars, in sport would puff away," was a creature who should be looked after by his relatives. So he had gone through life, tasting its sweets and ignoring its bitters, until one unhappy day he met Madeleine Jervis.

Then everything was changed.

Eros had been mocked for so long, only to take a fearful revenge at last. Having gone scathless all these years, Fanshawe was completely mastered by the mighty wave of love which swept over him. Not that he succumbed without many a struggle, for at first he resented this yielding up of his will to another. It was not her beauty, for he had seen far more lovely women and escaped without a scratch. It was not her superior goodness or gentle nature, for he was by no means blind to her faults. But she possessed a mysterious, subtle charm, which attracted him, and which he was powerless to resist, and which charm made her the one woman in the world to him.

He laughed at himself often; it seemed so wonderful that he at his age should be like a love-sick boy; but it was in that very thing that lay the secret of the intensity of his passion. He had not the boy's spring; he had lost that elastic state of mind which makes all things endurable, "*quand on est jeune*;" and while he laughed the arrow was piercing deeper and deeper into the wound.

Madeleine possessed him like a fever; his love was a perfect mania; and her coldness and indifference only increased his infatuation. Wherever he was, whatever he was doing, with whomsoever he was talking there was always the undercurrent of thought of her going on at the same time. As he walked along the streets he wondered idiotically whether her feet had pressed that pavement, and he could have knelt and kissed it if it had been so. Never, except during the few hours he slept—and then she haunted his dreams—was she absent from his mind.

At last, in despair of ever gathering any encouragement from her chill manner, he spoke to her mother, who bade him hope, and generally spoke him fair. Then, when, no doubt, she had sufficiently prepared the way for him, Mrs. Jervis gave him leave to appeal to

Madeleine herself. When he did so, she was perfectly honest with him. "You must know the truth," she had said; "I loved a man who is dead, and I shall never love again. But I like and respect you, and will be a faithful wife, if you still desire to marry me."

"I desire it with all my heart and soul," he said, though a sharp pang of jealousy of the dead man went through him.

"Then, as it is your wish, and my mother's——" she replied, breaking off with one of her rare smiles, as she gave him her hand.

And with that he was forced to be content. Indeed, he did not much fear the shadow of the dead man; he thought he would be able to win her love by the sheer strength of his own; and lo, the dead had returned to life, and had made of his flowering garden a desert waste.

Once allow yourself to become fond of a man or woman and you place in their hands a weapon with an envenomed point, which sooner or later you may be sure will be thrust into your own heart. So he had always said and believed, but finding his creed a true one did not lessen the smart of the wound in the least.

Seven months had passed since his wretched wedding morning. At last, one day in January he had news of his wife. The agent he had employed independently of the detective, sent him an address at a small fishing-village on the north-east coast. It was the last place in the world where one would be looked for, so lonely and so little known was it.

One thing the agent had omitted to tell him, and that was how he had also been employed by someone else to find Mrs. Fanshawe, and that when he sent Mr. Fanshawe word of her hiding place he had sent the same intelligence to his other client. That night Fanshawe left London for the North.

It was a wild time on the coast; the winds had been raging in their fury, and wrecks had been plentiful. As Philip walked across the sands of Cullerford, strong man as he was, he was glad of the shelter the cliff afforded him, while he kept an anxious look out for the woman he was in search of, and whom he had been told he should find on the sands. The coast was very irregular just here. In many places the cliffs, or banks, as they are called, had crumbled away, causing a number of little dangerous bays. Fanshawe had zigzagged through several of these when he became aware of the figure of a man walking along a little distance ahead. As he rounded a jutting portion of the land, and entered the next cove, Fanshawe lost sight of him, only to see him again when he in his turn rounded the rock, and entered the cove.

At that moment he recognized him. It was John Borlase, and he was talking eagerly to the woman Fanshawe had come to find.

Fanshawe continued his course, keeping close under the cliff, till he was but a very short distance from them. They had their backs turned in his direction, and the wind blowing from them towards

him, they had not heard his approach, while what they were saying was borne distinctly to his ears.

"At last I have found you," cried Borlase, with a ring of triumph in his voice. "Oh, my love! my love! why have you hidden yourself from me all these weary months?"

Quick as lightning, before her answer could come, the thought flashed across Fanshawe's mind: "Had she hidden herself all this time only to send to Borlase at last?" But the next moment his doubt was dispelled. Her consternation at seeing her old lover was real, and there was a despairing tone in her voice when she answered him which wrung Fanshawe's heart. It was the voice of one who had been fighting a hard fight, and having, as she thought, worsted her enemy, had paused for a while to rest, only to have her peace rudely disturbed before she had fairly gained breath.

"It was the only thing left to do," she said. "Oh! why have you hunted me down to make me fight the old fight over again?"

"Because I love you; because we are one, and no power on earth can keep us apart; because fate is stronger than your will, and struggling is useless. Why let this phantom of a tie hold you any longer?"

The listener behind the rocks shook with suppressed rage. His fists were clenched, and great beads of sweat stood on his forehead. He marvelled how Madeleine could be so blind to the callous selfishness of Borlase. He had ruined himself with riotous living; had left the woman he pretended to love to wait for the fulfilment of an indefinite promise; and returning to find her with a chance of happiness before her, had ruthlessly destroyed what he could never replace; while the man who would have given her his very soul to trample on was despised and vilified. How like a woman! he thought, bitterly.

"Whether the tie be only a phantom or not, it is strong enough to bind me," said Madeleine, in answer to Borlase's last speech. "I tell you again I am sorry you have found my hiding-place, for it only compels me to look for another. Jack, be merciful, and leave me. There is no other way; fate has been too strong for us. What can I hope for? What can I pray for? Nothing but his death can release me, and Heaven does not grant such prayers as that."

"His death! He will probably outlive us both."

"No doubt," she answered, wearily.

"What will you do, if he find you?"

"The same that I shall do now: hide myself again."

"You will not let him talk you over?"

"How little you know me after all," she said, scornfully. "I will never forgive him; I never pardon a lie great or small, and this——" She flung out her hands with a gesture full of disdain; a little trick of hers which Fanshawe knew so well, and which hurt him now as a blow.

As she finished speaking, a wave broke over her feet, and the two

retreated a few paces. This movement caused Fanshawe to see what he had for some minutes suspected without heeding, so much had his attention been taken up by the two in front of him. Now he looked towards the way he had come, and what had been a narrow strip of sand was now a boiling torrent. They were cut off by the tide, and unless help came, death stared them in the face.

Close to where he was standing was a shallow cave. He looked hastily into it and saw by the marks on its rocky sides that at high water, the tide rose, even there, to a considerable height. To climb the cliff was impossible; their only chance lay in a boat; and even if they were seen in time, what boat could live in such a sea? Deliberately he strode from his hiding-place towards the pair. Madeleine uttered a half-stifled shriek of surprise, and involuntarily clung to Borlase, who, as much startled as herself, raised his arm as though to strike the intruder.

Fanshawe eyed him disdainfully.

"You may spare yourself all trouble of that kind," he said. "The sea will soon fulfil your wish."

Borlase's arm dropped to his side, as for the first time he perceived the danger they were in.

"We are cut off!" he cried.

"Yes," said Fanshawe; "and our only chance of escape is that we may be seen and rescued by a boat."

Madeleine had drawn a little apart from the two men after her first start of surprise, and it was with almost a feeling of relief she saw the common danger they were in. Life had so little to give her that she did not fear death, and anything was better than a repetition of the scene of her wedding-day.

"Do you know the place? Is that so?" asked Borlase of her.

"If anyone were to see us directly, there would be no time to let them know at Cullerford, and to bring a boat round," she answered.

"Are there no boats at Seaton?" said Fanshawe.

"None but one wretched old thing that would scarcely live five minutes in this sea."

While she was speaking, Borlase caught a glimpse of a man fighting his way against the wind on the cliff, and springing out more into the open, he waved his hat and shouted to him with all his strength. Anxiously they watched the creeping figure up above. Would he stop and look over? or was roar of wind and wave too loud for him to hear them? Twice he paused, but each time it was only to tussle with the wind, and it was not until he had nearly passed, and hope had died within them, that he heard and, looking over, saw the peril they were in. Instantly he waved his hand, and calling something to them which the wind carried away, rapidly disappeared.

Meanwhile the sea had risen higher, coming in with wild leaps and bounds, till no dry foothold remained. No one spoke. Fanshawe stood and watched Madeleine as she sat on a piece of rock

gazing straight before her, while Borlase kept a sharp look-out seawards.

The past seven months had made sad havoc with her, Fanshawe thought. She was thin and worn, and her walking on the lonely shore through this wild weather told its own sad story. A woman whose mind is at rest does not do that.

The silence was painful and strained, but what speech was possible? Fanshawe had so often pictured their meeting in so many different ways and places, but never like this. Never with Borlase as onlooker, and with death coming swiftly to them all. While they had been groping blindly for a way out of the net, fate was already at work cutting the knot of their difficulty. It was curious, too, how indifferent both he and Madeleine seemed to the prospect of rescue. Of the trio Borlase alone was looking out to sea for the expected help.

So lost was Fanshawe in his thoughts that an exclamation from Borlase made him start like one awakened suddenly out of sleep. He looked in the direction Borlase was pointing, and saw a boat making for the bay in which they were entrapped. There were two men in her, and it seemed as much as they could do to make any headway at all and keep themselves afloat.

With a shake, Fanshawe pulled himself together and made preparations to meet her as far out as possible. He took off his boots, and taking Madeleine by the hand, he led her over the slippery rocks to the furthest point they could reach, while Borlase followed them closely. As the boat neared them, it became apparent that all three could not crowd into her. The men had risked their lives in the crazy tub as it was, and to put more than two people into her now meant certain death to all. The three stood on the pinnacle of rock with the boiling waves all round, Madeleine in the middle, erect and alone, neither of the men touching her.

Only that it was all so pitiable, Fanshawe could have laughed aloud at the thought that of all people on the wide earth to be collected together in such a plight, fate could find none other than themselves: the woman and the one man to be saved, and the other to be left. It was the very cruellest sport of the gods; a thing dropping from the sublime to touch the ridiculous.

The boat drew nearer still, and now one of the men who were rowing shouted through the wind: "We can only take the woman and *one* man. We will come back for the other."

A vain promise, as Fanshawe and Borlase both knew. The latter stood with his teeth clenched tightly together, and his breath coming short and hard. He was not afraid of death, and Fanshawe knew he was not showing the white feather; but all the same he did not want to be the man left behind. He wanted to live; to live with Madeleine. Fanshawe's face was as calm as though his features were carved in stone, he betrayed none of the suppressed emotion that Borlase showed, neither was it possible for the latter to guess at what was

passing in his thoughts. Rapidly he weighed everything, and made up his mind what he would do.

"I will never believe him ; I will never forgive him," Madeleine had said. Well, she should believe him in spite of herself.

As the boat touched the rock, and the men held her there for a moment, Fanshawe, with a sudden movement, slid behind Madeleine, and grasping Borlase by the collar, with one mighty effort he had lifted him from his feet and flung him fairly into the boat before anyone could have suspected his intention.

Before Borlase could recover his balance, Fanshawe had Madeleine in his arms, and then he paused. For one deadly moment the temptation assailed him to keep her there. Why not? She was his wife. She belonged to him ; if not in life, she should in death. Let Borlase go, and he and Madeleine would die together.

Then he looked down at her white face, as he lay almost insensible in his arms, and his love rose triumphant over self. He stooped and kissed her passionately.

"Madeleine, my love, my wife, you will believe me now!" he said. Then, watching his opportunity, as the waves washed the boat close again, he dropped her into the outstretched arms of the man ready to receive her. The next moment he was alone.

But a strange feeling of exaltation and buoyancy of spirit held him now. The dull ache at his heart was gone, and in its place was a sense of pleasurable excitement, expectation and relief, curiously blended together.

He stood, like a soldier at his post, and watched the receding boat, never taking his eyes from the figure of the crouching woman, while the waves beat higher and higher about him, like hungry lions roaring for their prey. The men tugged and strained at the oars, till they reached the outermost point of the land, beyond which was comparative safety. Fanshawe breathed a sigh of relief as he saw the point neared. Then as the boat stood away to round it, and was gradually lost to sight, a greater wave than any that had yet reached him, broke over the place where he stood and swept him off the rock.

It was with ill-concealed triumph and relief that Borlase lifted Madeleine out of the boat and carried her on to the beach. There was nothing to stand between them now. Of course, the boat had started again, but everyone felt that it was on a fruitless errand. At first the two were surrounded by an eager and sympathising crowd, each member of which was anxious to do something for them ; but Madeleine had always the same answer when they entreated her to go home.

"I shall stay here till the boat comes back," she said. And there was something about her which spoke of a trouble which the people could not understand, but which chilled them, and made them draw off one by one, leaving the two standing alone.

Borlase bit his moustache, and at last cried, impatiently :

"What is the use of stopping here, catching your death with cold ? Go home and change your wet things. I will come to you directly the boat returns. It will soon be here right enough."

"You think that he might hold out till it reached him, then ?" she asked, quickly.

"Confound it, no," he answered, roughly.

Madeleine stared at him for a moment. Then, as the meaning of his former speech dawned upon her, she turned away with a look of horror and aversion.

Borlase eyed her curiously. He felt the subtle change which had taken place in Madeleine, but he could not understand it.

The world makes us hard and cynical and bitter ; it crushes down all noble aims and lofty aspirations, and envelopes us in a cloak of selfishness and callousness. It is only when some startling shock comes upon us that the hard crust is rent, and we can see clearly, understanding what is real and what is phantasm.

Madeleine could no longer doubt her husband's truth. A dying man does not lie, and when he had uttered those last words as he put her into the boat, he thought that he had but a few minutes to live. He had counted the cost, and had deliberately sacrificed himself that she might be happy with her lover.

Happy ! With Jack Borlase !

"We needs must love the highest when we see it:" and, like Guinevere, her eyes were opened. But she prayed that, unlike her, it might not be too late.

When the man whom they had seen on the cliff had started off the boat, he had given the alarm in the village, and several men had gone to the top of the cliff, overlooking the cove, where they arrived just before Fanshawe was swept off the rock. No one had ever tried to either ascend or descend the cliff at this place ; but desperate needs require desperate remedies, and with the hour came the man. With the courage which seems ingrained in the men around our coast, one sprang out of the little group and quickly fastened two ropes round his waist. Then with a few hasty words of instruction to those about him, he began to lower himself over the cliff.

Breathlessly the men watched him, carefully paying out the rope as it was needed. He seemed to cling on to the face of the cliff, finding foothold where it looked impossible for anything but a cat to stand, until at last he reached the rocks below. Waiting his opportunity, he seized the right moment, and as Fanshawe was carried in on the top of a wave, the young fellow snatched at him, and succeeded in preventing his being taken out again. Having made fast the second rope round Fanshawe's body, those above managed to draw them on to a narrow ledge which would be uncovered for a short time longer ; and there the two remained until the boat again rounded the point, and pulled in to their rescue.

When Fanshawe was brought in senseless and bleeding, it seemed to Madeleine and Borlase as though he had risen from the grave. Borlase could scarcely restrain his feeling of disappointment : a feeling in which he had expected Madeleine to join. The coarse brutality of his nature came out in all its hideousness under the spur of excitement, and it was with a shudder of absolute repulsion that Madeleine turned from him and followed the senseless form of her husband, as they bore it to the inn.

The sea had given up its prey, but not before it had beaten and bruised him till there was but little life left in him.

For days Fanshawe lay hovering on the mystic borderland betwixt this world and the next, until at last one day came when he was able to look up, and understand what was going on around him. As his eyes fell upon his wife, a puzzled look came into his face. All through his illness he had seemed to be conscious of her presence, but until now he had thought it must be a dream.

"Is it really you?" he asked in a weak voice, which still was full of wonder.

"Yes, it is I. Do not try to talk until you are stronger."

"You believe me? You forgive?" he said, faintly.

"Hush!" she replied. "It is you who have to forgive me. Only grant me a little time, Philip; a little time in which to forget; and I will try to make atonement."

"You will not leave me?" he asked.

"No," she said, gently laying her hand in the feeble one he tried to move towards her. "No, never again."

He gave a sigh of utter contentment, as he murmured : "God is more merciful to me than I deserve."

Baffled and furious, Borlase returned to Australia, and in time Fanshawe came to see that the sore trouble which his presence in England had brought upon them had ended in being a blessing. If they had not passed through the waters of affliction, there would never have been such perfect sympathy as exists between Philip Fanshawe and his wife.



THE CLOCK ON THE STAIRS.

IT stood on the first landing of my father's Rectory of Wayle, looking down into the wide old hall.

Wayle Rectory was not always a parsonage ; a generation before we entered into possession, it had been the Manor House. The then lord of the manor of Wayle, being sumptuously inclined, built himself a lordly mansion a mile away, and turned his forsaken dwelling over to the living of which he was the patron.

It was a large square house, so thickly embowered in ivy that every year the strong shoots had to be cut ruthlessly away from the windows to let in the light. Round two sides ran a terrace, approached by a wide flight of stone steps. In front was a noble lawn, famous through the country-side for its roses, closed in by a shrubbery, with a vast acacia-tree in its midst. Behind were kitchen-gardens which would have provisioned an army, with an ample orchard and paddock and many acres of glebe. Truly, the parson might esteem himself fortunate whose lines had fallen unto him in such pleasant places.

The clock on the stairs was a legacy from bygone days, and had been left behind when the flitting took place thirty years before.

None knew its age. It was an old clock when the present squire's ancient butler was a little boy who cleaned the boots and weeded the gardens. It had a dark oak case, quaintly inlaid, which descended to the ground like an inflexible robe. A door in its chest gave access to the weights which moved it, the chains by which it was wound up, and the pendulum with a brass plate half a foot across. The face, of tarnished white metal, showed the hours in old-fashioned English numerals; on its forehead was a marine painting indifferently executed, representing a sailor clutching from a boat at a floating spar, which was always just beyond his reach. Its head was adorned with two horn-like projections, between which, black with age, perched a brazen eagle on a brazen globe.

It stood at three o'clock when we came to the house. It had stood so longer than anyone could remember ; and to this attached a weird tradition. Many years ago, it was said, the heir of the house had been killed in the hunting-field. It was three o'clock in the afternoon when he was taken from beneath his horse with a broken neck. At that same hour the old clock had run down, and had never gone since. The boy's father had forbidden its repair. And so it stood voiceless, pointing always to the fatal hour, the sad memento of an untimely end, until our strange faces gathered round it, and it fell under the hands of Uncle Jack.

Uncle Jack was mamma's only brother, and he was a sailor—the

then newly appointed captain of a great ocean-liner. He was a bachelor, and had made his home with us in the intervals of duty as long as I could remember. He was my beau-ideal of all that was manly, gentle and generous : and a hero-worshipping damsel of fifteen is a severe critic of such qualities.

I can see him now : of middle height, broad shouldered and deep chested ; with his curious sailor's walk. His face was bleached rather than bronzed with exposure to the sea air ; it was grave with a quizzical gravity, and lines of kindly humour lurked about the corners of the mouth and the keen, bright blue eyes. Every living thing loved him, because, with the tender heart of a true sailor, he loved every living thing. When he was away, we seemed only half a family. When he returned, he brought with him, besides innumerable presents of curious and unaccountable kinds, a gladness and freshness like the breeze of his own beloved ocean.

In common with most men of his calling, he could turn his hand to anything ; but he especially valued himself on his skill as a mechanic. With an utter disregard of the tradition attaching to the staircase clock, he attacked it before he had been two days in the house ; took out the works, cleaned them, put them together again, said there was no reason why the clock should not go. And go it did, keeping fairly good time, except that it would not strike the hours correctly.

In this respect, it was an accomplished diplomatist, continually saying one thing and meaning another ; calling it six o'clock when it was one, or loudly proclaiming midnight at eight in the evening. Uncle Jack laboured at this defect to no purpose ; the clock persisted in prevarication ; and so he had to content himself with tending it carefully night and morning and at odd times during the day, with the solicitude of a mother over a sickly child.

Well, Uncle Jack's leave came to an end, and he went off as usual to take up his command, leaving all sorts of injunctions and directions as to the treatment of the resuscitated clock.

They were useless. It seemed to miss the familiar hand, and after going with diminished regularity for a day or two, it suddenly struck—that is, it declined to strike or to do anything. It had, in fact, just “warned” for five in the afternoon, and was, no doubt, on the point of uttering some outrageous falsehood as usual, when it appeared to realise the state of things and stopped in disgust. Papa and my brother Tom both tried their hands at starting it again, but without effect. “Leave it alone,” said the Rector ; “it will give Jack something to do when he comes home again.”

Day followed day and week succeeded week in the sober, busy, never dull and always happy life of a comfortable country parsonage. It was early spring when Uncle Jack went away ; it was high summer when he was daily expected among us once more. Tom was home from Oxford for the “long,” and our cousins Jane and Kate, with

their brother Frank, a young doctor who had just obtained his diploma, were staying with us.

We young ones were all gathered in the ivied porch one morning after breakfast, planning how to spend the day, divided between the rival merits of croquet and a boating excursion. The sun streamed down upon the wide lawn, where the dew yet lay on the shady borders under cover of the shrubs. The green foliage of the great acacia was just stirred by the sweet south-west, which bore to us the scent of innumerable roses. The morning song of the birds was beginning to die into silence as they sought shelter from the growing heat. This mere delight of living was enough in such glorious weather, and we were in no hurry to make up our minds.

"What a splendid floor this is," said Kate behind us in the hall. She stepped off the broad path of matting and slid her dainty slipper along the polished boards. "Have you tried it yet, Fanny? It's almost a shame to see it lying fallow. Why doesn't Aunt Mary give a dance?"

"Happy thought!" cried Tom. "No time like the present. Come along, Kate." And he caught her round the waist and whirled her across the shining surface.

"Music, music!" cried Kate, struggling to stop. "Your time is awful, Tom. Play for us, somebody!"

But nobody was willing to be the victim.

"Mamma, mamma!" screamed a wild chorus; and that long-suffering personage was hauled in a flustered condition from the kitchen, where she had been giving the day's orders to the cook, and was forcibly conducted to the drawing-room, which opened into the hall. Thence presently issued, with not more than one false note in three bars, the strains of poor mamma's one waltz—the solitary survival of a musical education, long since terminated, which had lasted seven years and cost two hundred pounds. The matting was tossed aside; everybody clutched somebody else; and we all went at it pell-mell, with the zest and vigour peculiar to an impromptu dance when the performers are in the flush of youth and high spirits.

The fun was at its height when a remarkable thing took place. A loud groaning and wheezing was heard, and the clock on the stairs, after its four months' silence, struck loudly and deliberately, "One, two, three!"

The dancing came to a sudden stop, and we looked at one another, half startled, half laughing. The music ceased, and mamma came to the drawing-room door just as my father, pen in hand, opened that of his study opposite.

"Who's meddling with Uncle Jack's clock?" asked the Rector.

"What was it?" said mamma, coming to the foot of the staircase and looking up. The clock was motionless and silent. The hands still pointed to five o'clock.

"Vox et præterea nihil," said classical Tom. "No one has been

near it. It has taken it into its head to strike, without rhyme or reason—that's all."

"It struck *three*," said mamma, turning very pale. "Oh, William, something has happened to Jack!"

Now "something happening to Jack" was poor mamma's bugbear, of which she had never been able to rid herself since those long-ago days when he first went to join his ship, a curly-haired midshipman. Coupled with a half belief in omens and presentiments, against which argument and ridicule were alike powerless, this took a good deal of the happiness out of her placid existence while Uncle Jack was away. If she dreamed of him two nights running, if a dog howled, if so much as a coal blew out of the fire, her equanimity was disturbed at once, and she was never quite comfortable again until she had news of her brother. It was a standing family joke, and her dismayed exclamation was now received with a shout of irreverent laughter.

"Don't talk rubbish, my dear," said the Rector shortly, but looking up with a slightly perplexed air at the offending timepiece.

"I'm sure it means something," mamma persisted. "It struck *three*. Don't you remember the tale about that very clock in the old days ——"

"Maria," said the Rector, "if you *will* put such rubbish into the children's heads, I'll—I'll lock you up in the clock. You forget that the *Paladin* was signalled yesterday, 'all well on board.' You boys and girls, don't make such a row. How do you suppose I am to be ready for Sunday?" And he went back into his study and shut the door.

Mamma was unmercifully laughed at, but for all that the old clock had spoilt our fun. She was too much "upset" to go on playing, and the edge had been somehow taken off our appetite for dancing. No one would agree to any common course of action, and after lounging listlessly under the porch for a short time, we broke up into twos and threes.

The day, so merrily begun, passed with unusual heaviness; and we were all glad when dinner time came and with it a telegram from Uncle Jack, saying that his ship was safely berthed and that he would be with us before noon next day. This restored good humour, and mamma came in for more raillery. She was in some degree comforted, but did her best to keep down our rising spirits by the remark that Uncle Jack was not with us yet and all sorts of things might happen.

There was, after all, some ground for her anxiety; for notwithstanding his robust appearance and great muscular strength, Uncle Jack was not, it was understood, quite sound. "Something of the heart" was the vague phrase; but he never spoke of it himself nor gave any outward sign of it, so that in his cheerful, hearty presence it was difficult even to think of anything being amiss. He seemed the very impersonation of vitality.

However, by eleven o'clock next morning all uneasiness was set at rest by the sonorous hail of "What cheer, shipmate!" with which, on his return, it was the skipper's invariable custom to greet his brother-in-law or the first male member of the family he chanced to see.

He came striding into the hall, portmanteau in hand, hat on the back of his head, and was instantly surrounded by a clamorous group, fighting for the first kiss or the first grip of the hand. Mamma, with his strong arm round her waist, was consoled at last. You may be sure we did not spare her; the remarkable behaviour of the clock and the ominous construction she had put upon it were related with humorous embellishments by half-a-dozen voices at once.

"It's easily explained," said Uncle Jack. "This old house is as springy as a ratline. I've noticed myself that if anyone runs across the hall, you can feel it half way up the stairs. You were having a dance, you tell me. Exactly. You shook up the old rattletrap—reminded it of something it had forgotten to mention—and it spoke out accordingly. We'll have a look at it by-and-by. As for me, I'm hearty—thank Heaven for it! Never better in my life, and not so much as half a gale of wind out or home."

After the usual presents had been unpacked, gloated over, admired, criticised and mutually coveted, he went up to the landing, followed by the attendant crowd which he could never shake off for the first few hours after his return, and began to investigate the condition of the clock. After a few moments' poking and prying, he announced its return to life, and forthwith set it ticking. No sooner had he done so, than it once more solemnly struck three.

Uncle Jack gave a great laugh.

"It's an obstinate old joker, you see," he said. "Sticks to its tale, eh? Queer, though. I never could get it to strike the right hour, and I never knew what it would do next; but I don't see why it should strike the same twice running."

He moved the hands round; again it struck—three. Several times he did the same thing—always with the same result. Three o'clock it was, according to the clock, and three o'clock, in the teeth of astronomy, it should remain. He gave up the attempt to correct it.

"Ah, well," said he, "we'll overhaul it thoroughly to-morrow. I say, is lunch nearly ready? I'm as hungry as a shark."

The household was disorganised by his arrival, and lunch was late. It was past two when we sat down.

What a merry, happy party we were on that bright summer day. Every detail of the feast is burned in upon my memory with imperishable vividness. There was one of mamma's famous rook pies in honour of the occasion, made of alternate layers of young rooks and home-cured bacon, laid in a great round dish, with a mighty dome of golden crust over all. There was a ham, also home-cured,

at the other end ; there were stewed pippins and custard to follow. There was sparkling cider for the children and champagne for the elders, in which to drink the health of the returned wanderer. The sweet breath of summer stole in through the open windows. Stray bees came and went, visiting the flowers in the middle of the table.

Uncle Jack was in his best vein ; he engaged in a running fire of nautical chaff with Tom and Frank ; his stories were more racy, his dry witticisms more laughter-provoking than ever. He was full of plans for the enjoyment of his short holiday—excursions, pic-nics, what not—and he had a new treat in store for us : no less than a run round the coast, as far as his ship could take us, at the beginning of her next voyage, for as many as should be able and willing to come. In jest and laughter the time went quickly by, until the Rector pulled out his watch.

“Ten minutes to three !” he cried, “and a vestry meeting at a quarter-past. I must be off. Maria, did Mary Blake send her granddaughter up for some flannel this morning ? I told her yesterday to be sure to do so.”

He and my mother thereupon fell into a discussion of parish ailments ; and the rest of us were at the same moment attracted by a squabble between the twins, Bobby and Jimmy, over their presents—the ownership whereof, by reason of continuous interchange and revocation, had become rather mixed. Thus it happened that for the moment the general attention was diverted from Uncle Jack, and no one noticed how suddenly silent he had become.

“Well, I must be going,” said the Rector, for the second time. “Captain John, will you walk as far as the church with me ? I want to talk to you about —— Why, Jack ! good Heavens ! what’s the matter ?”

Mamma sprang from her chair and was at his side in an instant.

“Frank ! Frank ! come here ; your uncle’s ill ! Jack, dear Jack, what is it ? Won’t you speak to me ?”

“Stand back, all of you,” said Frank, sharply, as we crowded round with frightened faces ; “let him have air. You, Jessie, get the brandy—or, stay, the champagne will do. Try and swallow this, uncle.”

But Uncle Jack paid no heed. He turned his head slowly, and looked from one to the other round all the little assembly of those he loved—a pitiful, yearning look, which settled at last on his sister’s face. Then he gave a long, shuddering gasp, and lay back on Frank’s supporting arm.

“Take those children out of the room, someone,” said Frank.

It hardly needed his sorrowful, significant glance at the Rector to tell us the dreadful truth. Uncle Jack was dead !

Then, through the sound of sobs and the voice of lamentation, rang the discordant tones of the Clock on the Stairs, as, right for the first and last time, it mournfully proclaimed the hour of three.

THE QUEEN AT HOME.

TO understand the character and influence of our Queen, we should know something of her early life and surroundings, for the proverb "Train up a child in the way he should go," is just as true in our time as in that of the wise King, and has in no one been more fully exemplified than in Queen Victoria.

The daily life of the Childhood of the Queen, so well known in every household fifty years ago, has almost passed out of the recollection of her older subjects and is scarcely known to those now in the bloom of life, but as it is the key to her woman-life, it may be of interest to run over it rapidly.

After the death of the Duke of Kent, which occurred at Sidmouth when the Princess was eight months old, the mother and baby returned to Kensington Palace under the care of Prince Leopold.

The poor Duchess seems to have been very sad. The following touching account of her condition is from her own pen.

"A few months after the birth of my child, my infant and myself were awfully deprived of father and husband. We stood alone, almost friendless and unknown in this country; I could not even speak the language of it. I did not hesitate how to act; I gave up my home, my kindred, and other duties, to devote myself to a duty which was to be the sole object of my future life."

That she performed this duty with her whole heart, we know well. Let us venture into her home in Kensington Palace, where we can note the admirable way in which her household was ordered and see how the little Princess spent her days.

The whole family were early risers. As the clock struck eight, the Duchess, her daughter by her first marriage, Feodora, together with Miss Lehzen, her governess, met in the breakfast-room for prayer and thanksgiving, and then took breakfast.

As soon as the little Princess Victoria could sit up, she was brought into the breakfast-room and seated in her little rosewood chair beside her mother, having in front of her a small round table to correspond with her chair, upon which her bread, milk and fruit were placed, this being her usual breakfast, while her nurse stood behind and waited upon her. Breakfast being over, the little child either ran about the garden watering plants with her tiny watering pot, or, mounted on her donkey, rode round the grounds until ten o'clock. This donkey, which had been a present from her Uncle, the Duke of York, was the most highly valued of all her belongings.

From ten to twelve, the Duchess devoted herself to the little Princess, talking with and instructing her, after which she would amuse herself with her toys.

At two o'clock exactly, the Princess always dined upon the plainest and most wholesome fare, the Duchess and eldest daughter taking their luncheon at the same time. After her dinner, the child had lessons until four o'clock, when as a rule she went out walking or driving with her mother.

The Duchess dined at seven, and if anyone could have peeped in they would have seen the Princess Victoria, seated in her little chair at the right hand of her mother, taking her supper of bread and milk, her nurse, as usual, standing behind her. As soon as she had finished her supper, she was allowed to leave the table and play with her nurse until dinner was over, when she would return to her seat for dessert. This was always the practice, whether the Duchess had company or was alone.

About nine o'clock, the child was taken to her beautiful little French bed on one side of her mother's larger one, the Princess Feodora occupying a third on the other side, while the nurse slept in a small room adjoining.

The Princess's nurse, like all other nurses, sometimes wanted a holiday, and on these occasions the Duchess undressed and bathed the child herself.

The child must have made a pretty picture in house and garden, in her white dress and blue ribbons. Her dress was always simple and in good taste ; it was generally of very fine white cambric, and for outdoors a pelisse of the same material and a cottage straw bonnet, the material being changed for cold weather, but not the colour.

Up to the age of four, Prince Leopold, her Uncle, bore, as he promised he would do, all the expenses of his little niece's establishment and education, and he did so in a most liberal manner. But it was thought right by George IV. that Parliament should then be asked to grant her an allowance sufficient for her support and education, a proposition readily accorded, and it was agreed to pay £6,000 annually to the Duchess for the purpose.

On the occasion of this grant being made, many words of commendation were spoken in the two Houses. The Chancellor of the Exchequer remarked, "That as far as her education had proceeded, the young Princess had been exceedingly well brought up, the greatest pains had been taken with her; she had been reared with that attention to manners, morals and piety which became her condition."

This was no mean praise, and must have given the Duchess pleasure.

Although she was brought up with the greatest care and tenderness, and taught obedience, self-control and punctuality, she lacked one enjoyment which is almost necessary to the happiness of childhood, companions of her own age and station. An incident is related bearing upon this point.

The Princess always loved music, and the Duchess wishing to give her pleasure, one day invited a little girl called Lyra, who at the age of five played beautifully on the harp.

The Princess was charmed with Lyra's playing, and seemed quite absorbed in the music. Seeing this, the Duchess, quite contrary to her usual custom, left them alone together for a short time. On her return, she found the harp forsaken, and the two children seated on the hearthrug playing with, and surrounded by, toys.

It was very generally believed that the Princess had the companionship of her cousin, Prince Albert, and that they studied and played together. But Sir Theodore Martin does not mention this fact; on the contrary, he asserts that the two cousins did not meet until May 1836.

Very happy hours were spent by the Princess with her Uncle Leopold in Claremont, where her education was insensibly and delightfully promoted by the conversation of the Prince who, taking advantage of her passionate love of flowers, gave her easy lessons in Botany, a science in which he greatly excelled.

It was Prince Leopold who looked over her progress in study and her conduct marks once a month, and his praise or blame had great effect upon her. This good Uncle did very much to mould her character and train her to be England's Queen.

It is well known that the Duke of Kent died in debt to the Lords Fitzwilliam and Dundas, of whom he had borrowed large sums. As soon as the Princess was old enough to understand this, she regularly put aside a certain portion of her pocket money towards paying it off, and ere the crown was placed on her head, she had paid every farthing of the debts with interest. And more than this, before her marriage, she paid every bill owing by her mother, the Duchess of Kent, doing it in the most delicate manner. She appears to have abhorred debt, and it is said never owed a penny in her life.

Her training in little things was thoroughly well cared for. For example: she was always expected to finish one thing before beginning another, whether it were work or play. One day, while playing at hay-making, she flung down her little rake and went off to seek some other amusement, but this was not allowed; she was brought back, and compelled to finish the haycock she had already begun.

Truthfulness, self-control and obedience were earnestly and early inculcated. It was her mother's practice to make daily enquiries of the Governess as to her child's progress and conduct. It happened one day that she had given trouble, and the Governess had to confess that once she had been disobedient. "You forget, Lehzen," was the child's reply; "I was disobedient *twice*."

The Princess's work as a girl was very heavy; she had to be doubly educated: educated to be a Sovereign, therefore receiving the tuition generally bestowed upon boys; educated also as a female Sovereign, and therefore in all the accomplishments which adorn the home circle. She had to learn all that was necessary to make her a good Monarch and a fully-accomplished woman.

"Steadiness," says one who knows, "in indefatigable employment,

punctuality as to time, exactness as an arithmetician and as a pay-mistress, are leading features of our Queen's character; and the conscientiousness from which these quiet but valuable qualities spring, was instilled into her mind at an early age."

Of course she would not have been a child had she not occasionally shown temper and wilfulness. One outburst always appeared to me very comical. She was particularly fond of music, but did not care to practise, and on being told that there was no royal road to perfection and that she could only become mistress of the piano by constant practice, she at once closed the piano, locked it and put the key in her pocket, saying as she did so, "Now you see there is a royal way of becoming mistress of the piano."

Her education was carried on in strict seclusion, and she only emerged from it on the Accession of William IV., who, together with Queen Adelaide, liked to show the Princess as much kindness as possible.

It is a fact that from her birth to her accession, she was scarcely ten minutes together out of the sight of her mother, so carefully was she watched and guarded.

Her time and thoughts were so much occupied in studies necessary to fit her for her high destiny, that she had very little of what the young call pleasure, or even variety, in her life; and, therefore, when she was permitted to be present at any gaiety, it made a great impression upon her. An instance of this may be seen on the occasion of her being a guest at a Juvenile Ball, given by George IV. in honour of the youthful Queen of Portugal, who was very little older than our ten year old Princess. It was noticed that for long after this her amusements and hours of relaxation tended to balls and high ceremonies.

She dressed her numerous dolls in court costume, with plumes and lappets and amused herself by rehearsing court receptions and presentations.

Her first appearance at Court was on her twelfth birthday, when she stood by Queen Adelaide for three hours. Her dress was very pretty and simple, being made of English blonde over white satin. Her hair was fastened at the back of the head with a diamond agrafe, and on her neck a row of pearls.

It was in this year also that she performed her first public duty by opening the Victoria Park at Bath.

The Princess learned to know very much of the various parts of the country while a girl, for she was constantly taken by her mother to sea-side resorts, and also on visits to noblemen's seats; and many and touching anecdotes are related of her kindness and goodness of heart to all about her.

On the occasion of her eighteenth birthday, she received a present from her "King-Uncle" of a magnificent Broadwood piano worth £200. The day was kept as a general holiday throughout the kingdom.

The King gave a ball also in her honour, but, owing to illness, neither he nor Queen Adelaide were able to be present, so the Princess herself presided in the chair of state. She opened the ball by dancing with Lord Fitzallan.

We come now to the morning of June 20, 1837, when we find three men hammering at the door of Kensington Palace, and failing for a long time to gain admittance, for it was only five o'clock in the morning. However, their message brooked no delay. These men were the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chamberlain and the Royal Physician; and they had come to announce the King's death and to salute the new Queen.

As soon as the Princess was sufficiently awake to learn who was waiting for her, she hastily threw on a white shawl over her dressing-gown, and with hair hanging loose and slippers on her bare feet, she came to them.

As the words "Your Majesty" fell on her ears, tears filled her eyes, but she was dignified and composed, and held out her hand to be kissed.

Before they took their departure, she begged the Archbishop to kneel down with her to ask God's help and strength in her new and responsible position. Her first act as Queen, therefore, was a good one.

Her next step was to go to her mother and make her first request as Queen, viz. to be allowed two hours *alone*. And from that day to this, there has scarcely been a day in which the Queen has not taken refuge in her boudoir alone and with the key turned against intrusion.

Notwithstanding all that had to be done on that first day, she did not allow it to pass without writing, with her own hand, a letter of condolence to the widowed Queen Adelaide, and directed it to "Her Majesty the Queen." It was suggested that the letter should bear the address, the *Dowager* Queen, as she was no longer Queen. After a moment's pause, she said: "No, it must go as I have addressed it; I will not be the one to announce the change."

The Queen tacitly rejected the name of Alexandrina by signing in her peculiarly clear characters the simple name of *Victoria*. Hence she was proclaimed by the style and title of *Queen Victoria*.

When state papers were first brought to her for despatch of business, Lord Melbourne apologised for the large number of them. Her answer was: "I have not hitherto led a life of leisure, for you know well I have not long left off my lessons."

When the Queen took leave of her old home in Kensington Palace in order to take up her abode in the new Buckingham Palace, she showed great emotion, especially on quitting the simply-furnished bed-chamber, which she from infancy had shared with her mother.

At Her Majesty's first levée, upwards of two thousand gentlemen attended. The crowd was so great that one present said: "Diamond

buckles were broken and lost, and officers deprived of their epaulettes without the ceremony of court martial."

At the Queen's first concert, all the gentlemen stood, even the Duke of Sussex did the same. All the ladies were provided with chairs, except those of the Queen's household.

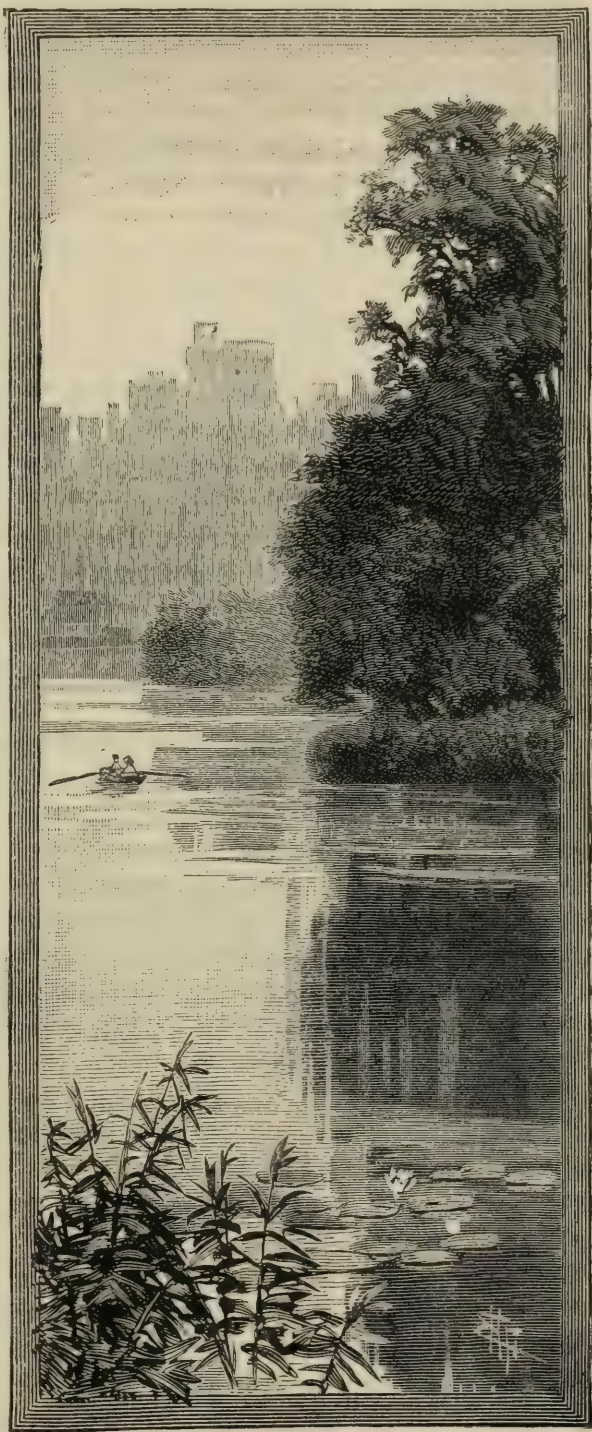
The Queen's distress when first asked to sign a death warrant, one can well imagine. It was for a soldier who had three times deserted. The Queen read it and asked the Duke of Wellington:

"Have you nothing to say in his favour?"

"Nothing," was the reply. "He has deserted three times, but," added the Duke, as he noticed the Queen's anxiety, "though he is certainly a bad *soldier* some witnesses spoke for his character, and, for aught I know to the contrary, he may be a good *man*."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times for that," said the Queen; and hastily writing across it *pardoned*, she passed the paper to the Duke with a hand trembling with emotion.

On July 17th, scarcely a month after her accession, she went in state to prorogue Parliament, a function last exercised by a maiden monarch nearly three centuries before. For this day, she put off her quaint mourning dress for robes of queenly state.



The dress worn by her was magnificent; a white satin kirtle embroidered with gold and trimmed with ermine stripes; the robe was confined at the waist with gold cord and tassels. Fanny Kemble was present in the House when she delivered her speech, and has stated that "her intonation was melodious and her enunciation perfect."

The Queen wore on her left arm, on this occasion, an armlet with the motto of the Order of the Garter.

A curious anecdote is related in connection with this Order of the Garter. It was at a chapter of the Order, summoned for the purpose of bestowing the vacant ribbon on her half-brother, the Duke of Leiningen. The various etiquettes of the approaching ceremony had been all arranged, when the Queen, with an innocent naïveté, said to the venerable Duke of Norfolk, "But my Lord Duke, where am I to wear the Garter?"

He answered that he recollected having seen some picture of Queen Anne, in which the Garter was on her left arm: and it was decided that this precedent should be followed.

In many ways, the Queen struck out new lines for herself. For instance, after her Accession she required a private secretary, and wished to appoint a lady to that office. It was opposed because no precedent could be found of an English monarch employing a female secretary.

Her Majesty however obtained what she wanted by prevailing on Miss Davys, the daughter of her childhood's friend and tutor, to accept the office of resident Woman of the Bedchamber, including in its duties that of Private Secretary.

On her first visit to the City after her Accession, she saw again Sir Moses Montefiore, who was one of the Sheriffs. It must have been pleasant to her to have had the opportunity of knighting the man who had shown her such delicate attention as a child. He was the first Jew who ever received that honour from a British Sovereign.

It is curious how little we know actually about the small things which belong to the daily life of our Queen. When I was young, I used to think that Her Majesty being Queen of England certainly would be exempt from the paying of Rates, Taxes, Tolls and such like impositions; I was taught better from the following circumstance which came to my knowledge.

The Queen, with her ladies, gentlemen and attendants, rode through the toll bar of Battersea Bridge, making sixteen persons in all. The last to pass through was a groom, and the toll-keeper demanded sixteen pence, no one, however, had any money, and the whole cavalcade would have been delayed but for the groom offering the man a good silk handkerchief as a pledge that he would return with the money.

I think if there is one virtue more than another in which our Queen excels, it is her kindness of heart and sympathy with those who suffer. One or two instances of it which appeared soon after she

became Queen may have passed out of the memory of even her oldest subjects and will I think bear mention here.

When Queen Adelaide went on a visit to Windsor for the first time after her bereavement, our Queen requested that she would make choice of a bedroom from among the many in the Castle, and naturally she selected the one she had used in her husband's lifetime.

It was freely resigned by Her Majesty, who with equal delicacy and kindness caused the fact to be concealed that it was her own bed-chamber that had been selected. Another instance of it was as follows: Queen Adelaide had previously to William IV.'s death planted some violets in the Hope Garden at Windsor. The first violets which appeared, the Queen plucked with her own hands and sent them to Queen Adelaide at Marlborough House.

In these days, when we live at such a rapid rate that there seems no time for the little courtesies and politenesses which make life so sweet, it is refreshing to be reminded of the manner in which our Queen found time for them notwithstanding that she was the busiest woman in the kingdom.

I suppose it would have been hardly possible to have known anything of the private, everyday life of any former Queen of England in the same way and to the same extent that we are permitted to know that of our own Queen; and surely it is one of our privileges in this reign that this knowledge has been granted us, not only because it is good to have such a pattern of domestic life among us, but because it binds us more closely to our Queen when we see that her life has to be lived out in all its joys and sorrows just like our own. That she has the same daily harrassing cares; the same necessity for industry; and has to fight and wrestle for her immortal Crown just like the poorest among us. Surely all this forms a bond of union stronger than anything which can be suggested, and my firm belief is that if danger assailed her or if she needed any demonstration of the strength of her people's love, there is not a subject in her kingdom who would not fight for her as for his own nearest and dearest.

We have seen something of the way in which her days were passed previous to her Accession, and it would not be less interesting to learn how the hours were occupied by the Maiden Monarch.

She rose at six o'clock, being dressed as any other lady by her own personal maids; her usual morning dress being an elegant dressing gown of white silk. She devoted the earliest part of the day to her private devotions and the study of the Holy Scriptures. She generally breakfasted in her own room, the exception being when she took it in company with her mother, the Duchess of Kent, when the hour was ten. The Duchess made it a rule never to enter the Royal presence without a summons, an etiquette observed from the first day of Her Majesty's Accession. On the occasions when they breakfasted together, an attendant was despatched to request the company of the Duchess.

The mother and daughter at these times never conversed about State affairs, but rather on the last book the Duchess had read, for she was a great reader and talked well.

Her Majesty employed herself the whole morning in transacting business. She read all the Despatches and studied every paper requiring her Royal assent. Sometimes when there was great pressure of business, her private secretary, Miss Davys, would carry to her the documents waiting for signature before she rose in the morning, so that there might be no delay in public business. At twelve o'clock, she gave audience to Cabinet Ministers. Here all is very silent, as the Queen deliberately looks over each document handed to her. She rarely disapproves, but when she does the unfortunate Minister responsible for it has been heard to say he would rather face ten Kings and the whole Opposition Benches than one Queen.

And what becomes of her Majesty's ladies and visitors during these long hours in the morning?

Greville says they are passed without the slightest constraint. Each person is at liberty to act as best pleases himself. He goes on to say that "There is none of the sociability which makes the agreeableness of an English country house, there being no room in which the guests assemble, sit, lounge and talk, as they please and when they please." Yet he acknowledges that there is a billiard-room and a library well stocked with books.

There were two breakfast-rooms, one for the ladies and guests and a second for the equerries, and when the meal is over everyone disperses, and nothing but another meal unites them.

To return to the Queen. Work being over for the time, she lunched and then rode out with a large suite, the more there were the better she liked it. She rode well, and generally at a full gallop for about two hours.

On her return, she occupied herself with music and singing, but her delight was to play and romp with any children staying in the castle, and she was so fond of them that she generally contrived to have some there.

At dinner, everyone was present. The nominal hour was half past seven, soon after which the guests began to assemble in the drawing-room, the Queen rarely appearing till nearly eight.

The Lord in Waiting went in when all were assembled and instructed each gentleman which lady he was to take down to dinner. Then the Queen, preceded by the gentlemen of the household and followed by the Duchess of Kent and all her ladies, entered the room, bowing to the gentlemen and shaking hands with the ladies. Then taking the arm of the man of highest rank went into the dining-room.

It was much like any other dinner, the Queen sat the usual time, but did not permit the gentlemen to sit long after her. They were

generally summoned to coffee in a quarter of an hour, which they took in a room adjoining the drawing-room. She never sat down in the drawing-room until the men appeared, when she would speak a few kind words to each; and then the Duchess of Kent's whist party was arranged, and those who did not play sat about a round table and the Queen on a sofa near it, where chatting, music and singing went on till about half-past eleven. It is said there was always a certain restraint in the evening's society, as it was impossible to forget for a moment that the hostess was a queen, and that love her as they might, the company never lost sight of the respect they owed her.

Large as the castle is and many as the guests often were in these days of the maiden Queen, she ordered every detail herself and knew where everybody was lodged. The etiquette at dinner is for the Lady in Waiting to sit next the gentleman on the Queen's left, and the Maid of Honour to sit next the gentleman on the Queen's right.

The gentleman who most frequently occupied the seat on the Queen's left was Lord Melbourne.

When a new maid of honour arrives, she receives her badge of servitude, which is the Queen's portrait surrounded with brilliants on a red bow. It is the custom for the ladies in waiting and maids of honour to wait in the corridor near the door leading to the Queen's apartment just before dinner. And here it is that a new maid of honour is presented and kisses hands on her appointment.

The duties of the maids of honour are as a rule very easy, and except at meals or when the Queen sends for them, they may remain quietly in their own rooms. One of their duties consists in giving the Queen her bouquet before dinner.

Of course there are times at which they must stand for hours without showing the slightest appearance of weariness, and few as their duties are, they demand rigid punctuality and obedience. The maids of honour have a room downstairs where they may receive their friends and relations, but these must not come upstairs.

Their hours are regular, breakfast at ten, lunch at two, dinner at eight.

I have not mentioned the many narrow escapes the Queen had up to the time of her coronation, because all books mention them. But there is one which I was told on good authority which I do not think has appeared in print.

The Queen, the Duchess and ladies were driving up or down Highgate hill when the horses ran away, splintering the carriage and threatening the lives of those within it; a publican ran out of his house and at the peril of his own life stopped the horses. The Queen and her mother were helped out and went into the little public-house until another carriage could be obtained. Here she found everything very clean, and a woman nursing her baby. The Queen took it from her and kept it until the carriage appeared, when she kissed it and gave it back to its mother.

The publican was asked to come to Buckingham Palace in the evening. This he did, and on being asked what the Queen could do for him, he answered he required nothing for what he had done, but he would dearly like to take down the old sign of his house and put up the arms of his Queen. The Queen said she did not know if it might be allowed, but that if it could, he should certainly have his wish.

Of the Queen's Coronation so much has been written that it is only needful to mention one or two circumstances in connection with it that may prove interesting.

Among the striking features of the Queen's Coronation were first the Queen receiving the ring which betrothed her to her people. The ring is a very ancient emblem of power and has been used as part of the Coronation Ceremony since the Heptarchy. A new one is made for each Monarch; it is of pure gold, inlaid with a large table-cut ruby, on which is engraved a plain St. George's Cross.

Unfortunately, in our Queen's case, the ring was made too small and would only properly fit the little finger instead of the fourth. The Archbishop insisted that it must go on the fourth and proceeded to press it on; but it gave her great pain, and after the ceremony she was compelled to bathe the finger with iced water and have the ring removed.

The second is that when the orb of Empire was put into her hand, she asked Lord Thynne: "What am I to do with it?"

"Your Majesty is to carry it, if you please, in your hand."

"Am I," she said; "it is very heavy."

This orb is a ball of gold richly adorned with gems. The globe is an emblem of dominion and the cross above shows that religion ought to be the Crown of Empire.

The sceptre of power, which was placed in the Queen's right hand, was of gold embossed with precious stones. It was two feet nine inches and a quarter long.

The anointing spoon is very ancient; it is of gold, and very thin, with four pearls on the broad part of the handle.

The crown placed on her head was a new one; the jewels were worth £130,000.

One incident brought out her kindness. Lord Rolle, an old man of between 80 and 90, fell down as he was getting up the steps of the throne to do homage. Her first impulse was to rise, and when afterwards he came again to do homage, she said "May I not get up to meet him?" And this she did, going down one or two steps to prevent his coming up—an act which made a great sensation.

Greville, who is not in the habit of saying kind things, declares "That it is in fact the remarkable union of naïveté, kindness and good nature with propriety and dignity which makes her so admirable and so endearing to those about her."

Perhaps one of the most graphic descriptions of the procession to

the Abbey was given by Mendelssohn, the Great Composer, who witnessed it. It seems that £200,000 were paid for seats only to witness the procession.

Of course with our Queen, as with all maidens, her marriage was the most important event in her life.

So little has been said about the wooing of Prince Albert that the following may not come amiss.

At one of the Palace Balls, just before the Queen declared her engagement to her Council, she presented her bouquet to the Prince.

To a man less clever, this would have proved very embarrassing, for his uniform jacket was fastened up to the chin and offered no place wherein to deposit the gift; but without a moment's hesitation he took out his penknife and slit an opening in his jacket next his heart, and there placed the Royal Flowers.

The Queen confessed to the Duchess of Gloucester that she had proposed to the Prince and not the Prince to her: which, said her Majesty, was a much more nervous thing to do than even making the declaration of marriage to her Council. It seems that the proposal ran thus:—

“Do you like England?”

“Very much.”

“Would you like to live in England?”

“Exceedingly.”

“Then it depends on you to make it your home.”

The marriage went off very well, the wedding cake weighed 300lbs; but all our young people would, I am sure, have objected to the way in which the Royal Pair left London for Windsor. They went in a shabby old coach, with postillions in undress liveries and with a small escort. It was left to the Eton boys, however, to give éclat to the journey, for they all turned out in white gloves and favours, and received them most enthusiastically.

After her marriage, the Queen's life became much easier in consequence of the great help afforded her by the Prince, although she never gave up the careful scrutiny of every Despatch which entered or left the country.

They seemed to have lived a very happy life in Windsor. Mendelssohn gave a charming description of their domestic life; and any writings which have appeared from the pen of Lady in Waiting or Maid of Honour all bear testimony to the simple, quiet and happy way in which their leisure was spent. And when it happened, as it sometimes did, that the royal pair had a tête-à-tête dinner, the ladies of the household always felt dull and unhappy at being deprived of their society. Of course they had their daily domestic worries, just like any other married people, intensified in their case because of the impossibility of setting things right with their own hands and on the instant. They could not even get a pane of glass put into

a window, no matter how the wind blew in, except through appealing to certain authorities. Prince Albert, like a good head of the house, looked into this, and was able in time to put it right. This was one of the first works he set himself after his marriage.

The arrangements were not quite the same as before marriage. They breakfasted at nine and took a walk immediately afterwards. Then came the state business. When that was over, some time was spent in drawing. Lunch was at two, and Lord Melbourne came to the Queen in the afternoons. At six she drove either with the Prince or with her mother.

The Prince read aloud to the Queen most days, and they dined at eight, as a rule with company. The Prince had prescribed earlier hours than formerly, and the party usually broke up at eleven.

Perhaps nothing ever gave the Queen more pleasure than the Prince's success in the Great Exhibition of 1851. As she herself writes: "It is a day which makes my heart swell with pride and glory and thankfulness. God bless my dearest Albert, and God bless my dearest country, which has shown itself so great to-day."

After she became a mother, the Queen was very proud of her children's sayings and doings, and would narrate them with much glee. But at the same time she was judicious with them, and never, if she knew it, allowed them to take liberties with people because of their high position. It is well-known how, one day, going into a room and finding a housemaid polishing a grate, they took the brush from her, thinking it would be great fun to help to polish it, but they were not satisfied with this, but polished the poor girl's face. The Queen, hearing of this, made them give up their pocket money to buy the girl a new dress, which they had spoiled, and beg her pardon. Their remark was, they would willingly buy the dress—but as to begging pardon of a housemaid—— However, they did it.

I know that the Queen often regretted that state business prevented her from being with the little ones when they said their prayers. She chose their governesses with great care, and both she and the Prince always knew and interested themselves in what each child was learning as well as in the books they read.

It was by the careful economy of the Prince that the Queen was enabled to purchase the Estate of Osborne, in the Isle of Wight, and this residence became the special delight of both. The Queen's remark was, "It is a relief to be here away from all the bitterness people create for themselves in London. The Prince specially marked the day on which they took possession by repeating some lines from Luther's Hymn. The Queen commemorated one of her birthdays by giving her children the Swiss Cottage and its grounds, about a mile distant from Osborne.

Each child had a garden, and worked under the direction of a gardener for two or three hours a day. Each had a set of tools marked with the owner's name, and for all work done the gardener

gave a certificate, which was presented to the Prince, who paid them the exact price of their labour.

The young princes had a carpenter's shop, and the lower part of the cottage was fitted up for the princesses as a kitchen, pantry, dairy and larder, where they learned to cook, and where, with arms white with flour, they learned to make cakes, tarts and all kinds of made dishes, to cook the vegetables they had grown, and to preserve the fruit of their gardens.

In fact they were trained here to be good housewives. Sometimes they eat the food they had prepared, and on very special occasions the Queen and Prince were invited to a repast prepared by their hands. As a rule, however, the poor had what they cooked. They had there also a Natural History Museum, most of the contents being collected by themselves.

It was, however, in Balmoral that the Queen lived the most simple life. They lived here without any state. In fact, like very small gentlefolk—small house, small rooms and small establishment, and with only a single policeman to act as guard.

Her deep sorrows, I need not touch upon, every subject in the realm knows them. This being merely a sketch, a great deal of the filling in must be left. The great men who have lived in her reign; the wonderful transformation wrought by steam on our traffic and manufactures; the astounding result of the penny postage; the telegraph and telephone: all these, with many other marks of our Queen's reign, will be found in the many books which have lately appeared.

It remains for us only to pray for the safety, honour and welfare of our Sovereign and her Dominions, and with one heart and voice to cry "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN!"

E. B.



LOST AND FOUND.



IF you walk along the beautiful Gower coast, leaving Oxwich behind you, you pass, before reaching the Mumbles, a little bay called Langland. It is much frequented in the summer, partly because the bathing is pleasant, partly because it is so easy to get there either by rail or road.

Some of my readers may be familiar with the spot. If so, they will remember a small house built on the top of the cliff a little to the left of the bay. A long narrow room with sides of glass, built on to the original square house, runs out almost to the edge of the cliff. Sitting in that room, with the waves at high tide dashing against the rocks below, one could almost imagine oneself in a cabin, and it was a favourite room with all who occupied the house.

The family to whom the house belonged usually spent there a couple of months every summer; but one year Mrs. Kyle, the bright-faced woman who presided over the bathing department, informed the neighbours that the family had gone abroad, and "Osborne Cottage" had been let for six months to foreigners with a queer name she could not remember.

This vague account excited people's curiosity, so that when one evening in June a carriage was seen driving down the lane which led to Osborne Cottage from the high road, quite a crowd of people rushed up the winding-path on the cliff-side to welcome and gaze upon its occupants.

Three people got out from the carriage, which was closed.

First appeared an elderly lady in widow's weeds, followed by a tall, elegant girl so strongly resembling her that it was evident they were mother and daughter. After them came another young girl with a most lovely face, but an intensely sad expression.

Mrs. Kyle advanced, courtseying and smiling, and welcomed them in Welsh to Langland. Then finding that she was not understood, she came down to English, and soon established a friendly understanding with the new comers. Before she left them, she ascertained their name was L'Estrange, not so very queer a name after all.

The day after their arrival the two girls came down to the sands, both looking fresh as the morning in their white dresses and sailor

hats. Miss L'Estrange, the tall, fair girl, moved about amongst the people, chatting to everyone she came across, apparently delighted with all around her. The sad-faced one, Colinette, sat beneath a large rock, dreamily watching the scene, but addressing no one. Mrs. Kyle, who was moving her bathing-tents further up the beach out of the way of the incoming tide, fancied she was feeling lonely, and went up to speak to her.

"You will soon get to know the people down here, Miss," she said, "and I am sure you will like our Bay when you come to see more of it."

Colinette smiled ; a sweet, lovely smile that quite won the bathing woman's heart ; but she made no reply.

"Your sister there," pursued Mrs. Kyle, with rather an interrogative accent, "is making friends with everybody."

Again no reply. The last remark scarcely demanded one, nevertheless the silence, and the mournful look which had come into the brown eyes gazing at her, perplexed the kind-hearted woman. So young a girl had no business to look so sad.

"Would you like to bathe, my dear?" she asked, making one more attempt ; "there are several ladies in the water now."

This time Mrs. Kyle was answered by Miss L'Estrange who came up at that moment. "Colinette will bathe, and so will I," she said. "Come and show me two nice tents."

The tents in question were simple and original, consisting of a square skeleton framework of wood with a canvas covering. When it was necessary to move one, a member of the Kyle family got inside, clutched the wooden framework and walked away with it. On such occasions the tents presented the appearance of animated brown canvas ghosts stalking about, and sometimes showing an undue amount of leg.

Dora selected her tent, and followed it as it stalked off to a convenient spot, talking very fast as it moved.

"Is that young lady your sister?" asked the tent.

"No," replied Miss L'Estrange ; "she is my aunt."

"Your aunt !" exclaimed the brown canvas in an astonished tone.

"Yes ; my aunt," repeated the girl, laughing. "Colinette is the daughter of my grandfather's second wife, a Frenchwoman. She left France and came to live with us when her parents died."

"Ach, I am a stupid woman," exclaimed Mrs. Kyle, as she emerged from her covering. "Here have I been bothering the poor young lady with my English, and she, I dare say, all the time speaking only the French language."

"Colinette speaks no language," said Miss L'Estrange, still in the same gay unconcerned manner. "She is dumb."

Mrs. Kyle stopped and stared at the speaker. If true, what a terrible truth, and what a light way of telling it. Oh, the poor young thing ! No wonder that mournful look had come into the brown

eyes. The tears welled up into Mrs. Kyle's own as she thought of it. Miss L'Estrange looked at her, surprised.

"Oh! we are used to it now," she said; "it happened so long ago. Colinette had a terrible shock once. She lost her power of speech then, and has never recovered it, but she can hear all we say, so it is not quite so distressing as if she had been born deaf and dumb."

From that time forth Colinette was as a sacred thing to her, and, indeed, when her sad history became known, to most of the frequenters of the Bay. There was nothing they would not do to give her pleasure. Old and young all vied with each other in showing her attention, and strove to anticipate every possible wish. And all were more than repaid if the faintest look of pleasure came into those mournful eyes.

Dora L'Estrange was very popular at first. She had a gay and unconventional manner which was very charming. But after a time public opinion veered. It became evident that self was ever uppermost with her, and on no occasion did she ever seem to think of others. When one day a local authority pronounced on the beach that Miss L'Estrange was very selfish, and decidedly unkind to "Poor Colinette," he embodied the feelings of the people and no dissentient voice was heard.

Never in her life, since that accident in her sealed past, had poor Colinette been so happy as she was during that first sunny month at Langland.

Public opinion was right as usual. Dora L'Estrange was decidedly unkind to her afflicted little relative. It was tedious to talk to a person who could not make any reply; it was dull to go about with a speechless companion; so Miss Dora went her way, and allowed Colinette to go hers, never striving to throw a ray of sunshine across the dark path of the dumb girl.

Mrs. L'Estrange was wrapt up in her daughter, and resembled her much in character. She gave Colinette her liberty, attended to all her material comforts, and considered she thereby fulfilled her duty towards her.

The unexpected kindness and sympathy which Colinette met with in this secluded little Welsh watering-place was, therefore, as strange as it was delightful.

Then too, there was the sea; for Colinette loved the sea, and bathing was her great delight. She was an expert swimmer. The waves were often rough when they came sweeping into the bay; the currents a little distance out were always strong; but new life and strength came to Colinette as she battled against them. It seemed as though she were half water nymph and could defy the sea. That rolling expanse of ocean was a vast Kühleborn, and she the Undine it loved, and which it could take to its bosom, but could not drown.

Bright and happy days, however, cannot last for ever. Clouds

came, rain followed, the beach was deserted, and Colinette returned to the repressed inner life she led when shut up in the house with Dora and her mother.

It was dull for them all. The glass room, so charming on sunshiny days, looked cheerless and cold in wet weather, and books and music palled upon them after a week's incessant rain. The lively Dora took to moping, and spent most of her time lying on the sofa, grumbling at the weather and life in general.

"I wish I had someone to talk to and amuse me," she said one night as she rose to go to bed. "I am not like Colinette. I can't be happy for hours poring over conventual books. I believe Colinette is secretly a Roman Catholic, mamma. She has been gazing with rapt eyes at a lace-edged picture of a saint for the last half hour.

Colinette coloured up violently, and moved away with her book into a corner beyond the light of the lamp. With a little shrug, Dora went on: "Let us write and ask Gerwyn Lloyd to come and stay with us. He has given us several hints to do so, and we have never taken them. Now that his mother is dead, and I cannot stay there, it is the only way to see him."

Mrs. L'Estrange assented, and it was agreed that Dora should write and ask him to come at once. "That means that he will pack up the instant he has read my letter, and be with us on Friday evening," said Dora, walking off, with a triumphant smile on her pretty face.

Colinette listened with interest in her dark corner. She had heard much of this Gerwyn Lloyd, and knew he was a very old friend and admirer of Dora's. She knew also that Dora liked him as well as it was in her power to like anyone, and fully intended to become Mrs. Gerwyn Lloyd as soon as duly invited. She anticipated but little personal pleasure from his visit. "My dumb presence will only weary him as it wearies Dora," she thought drearily, as she gazed through the glass panes into the outer darkness, and listened to the ceaseless patter of the rain.

Friday evening came, and with it, as Dora had prophesied came Gerwyn Lloyd.

Colinette was alone in the glass-room when the servant announced him. She had pushed back the large sliding pane at the end of the room and was leaning out, watching the sea, regardless of the wind and fine rain which beat in upon her face.

She turned with a start as he advanced, and gazed with a look of embarrassment. Alas! it was not in her power even to greet a stranger: she could only stand speechless, a hot flush suffusing her face.

The young man bowed, wondering much who this strange girl was who received him so shyly. He thought he had never seen anyone so beautiful. Colinette that day wore a soft dark green dress, and had stuck a bunch of yellow roses into her belt. The colours

suiting her to perfection. The wind blew her dark hair into little curls over her fair forehead and delicate little ears, and her eyes had the shining look which eyes sometimes have when tears have been recently shed. Behind her, a beautiful background to the picture, spread the sea.

"Who can she be?" thought Gerwyn, for Dora had never spoken much of her young aunt, and he had forgotten that she lived with them. He set to work to find out.

"You are staying with the L'Estranges, I suppose?" he said interrogatively. And then, receiving no reply, he went on: "I was delighted to receive their invitation, for it is lonely work knocking about alone, as I have been doing lately. I only returned last week from a tour in Normandy. Do you know Normandy?"

It was an unfortunate question. The tears rushed up into Colinette's eyes, and hung in great burning drops upon her lashes. She put her hand up to hide them. Did she know Normandy? Ah! should she ever forget it. It was a land of sunshine and flowers; life there was a life of love, and talk and happy laughter, not of cold neglect and loneliness, and a silence almost as bad as the silence of the dead.

Gerwyn was distressed at the effect of his question. What was he to do or say? Suddenly a light flashed across him.

"You must be Colinette!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten."

Colinette nodded, and looked up at him through her tears. Gerwyn took her hand and pressed it gently. "Forgive me," he said; "I have heard much of you from my poor mother, who knew yours. I would not pain you for the world, and I trust we may become great friends.

Dora, in her most becoming dress, came rustling into the room at this moment, and greeted Gerwyn with evident pleasure. Colinette retreated to her favourite corner, and watched her new found friend.

Gerwyn Lloyd could bear criticism. He was a very handsome young fellow, tall, exceedingly fair, with marked features, and brilliant blue eyes. It was evident that he admired Dora, and she appeared to advantage in his presence, for Dora, when pleased could be very attractive.

All that evening they chatted together, for the most part about old days. But Gerwyn was conscious the whole time of the dark eyes watching him from the corner, and he constantly returned their gaze, which fascinated him strangely. When he went to bed that night it was not Dora's face, but Colinette's which haunted both his waking moments and his dreams.

The weather cleared soon after Gerwyn's arrival, and they were again able to spend their mornings on the beach, or to roam about the neighbourhood as fancy took them.

Gerwyn would never start on any expedition, unless Colinette were first hunted up and induced to accompany them. Dora

was a little put out by this constant insistence on Colinette's presence ; she would have preferred having Gerwyn to herself ; but for a long time it never occurred to her that in Colinette she could have a possible rival.

One day when Gerwyn had been with them about a month, Dora came down and announced that it was her birthday. "And for once you had forgotten it," she said, with a little pout to Gerwyn.

"Oh no, I had not," he returned, and putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, he drew forth a very handsome diamond ring, which he presented to her in the presence of her mother and Colinette. Dora flushed, a thing she rarely did, and looked as if she scarcely liked to accept it.

"It is too much ; I cannot take diamonds from you," she said.

"I bought it in Paris especially for you," replied Gerwyn ; "and I shall be much hurt if you refuse it."

So Dora accepted it gracefully, and placed it on a finger of her right hand. She did not like to put it on her left.

"I shall always remember my twentieth birthday by this," she said, wondering how much or how little Gerwyn meant by his present. On the whole, she was inclined to think it significant.

But her pride in her present was considerably lessened by a circumstance which occurred later in the day.

Gerwyn was smoking a cigarette on a bench outside the glass-room, with Dora by his side. His eyes were fixed on Colinette, who was standing near them, leaning over the wall, and watching the people on the sands. Her left hand hung down by her side, and Dora noticed for the first time that she wore a beautiful pearl hoop on the third finger.

"Where did you get that pearl hoop from, Colinette," she exclaimed, taking hold of her hand.

Colinette looked with a grateful smile at Gerwyn.

"I gave it to her this morning," said he, slowly, flicking the ash of his cigarette. "I noticed that she had no ornaments, and anticipated her birthday."

"And did you also buy that in Paris especially for her ?" asked Dora, with a mortified ring in her voice.

"No," he answered, without looking at her ; "for then I knew no Colinette. The ring belonged to my mother."

Dora was silent. She was both hurt and angry. His present meant nothing then ; and he had paid Colinette the higher compliment.

About a week after the episode of the rings, the three young people started, after an early luncheon, to walk to the neighbouring Bay of Caswell, a distance of about two miles. Their path lay at first through fields by the side of the beach, and then ascended, skirting the edge of the cliff and leading them over the brow of a wind-swept hill, through gorse and heather and bracken.

Dora and Gerwyn chatted away much as usual, but Gerwyn kept turning to Colinette to see how the conversation affected her, a habit he had unconsciously fallen into. He fancied she looked unusually sad, so he stopped, and gathering a little nosegay of delicate harebells, placed it in her hands. Colinette smiled and fastened them into the bosom of her white dress.

Dora had walked on impatiently, and Gerwyn when he rejoined her, found her decidedly cross. When they had climbed down the hill on the other side, and were upon the sands of Caswell, Dora said she must leave them in order to call upon a friend, an old lady, who had lately arrived at the hotel above.

"You can order that man with the tea-cups under the rocks to get us some tea ready," she said to Gerwyn. "He always has a kettle boiling. Or," she added as she walked off, "you can collect shells for Colinette, since you evidently consider it your duty to amuse her."

This parting shot told. Gerwyn, much annoyed, made no attempt to collect shells, but stood knocking about the loose sand with his stick. Colinette walked a little distance off, and seating herself on some large loose stones, pulled a little volume out of her pocket and pretended to read, to hide her confusion and distress.

Was it so, then? Did he think it his duty to amuse her? Was she really wearisome to him, and did he show her all those little kindnesses merely from a sense of duty or because he pitied her? If so, she would avoid him; she would absent herself every day and all day long; she did not want his pity.

But as she said this to herself, a great wave of feeling passed over her, and she knew that she did want it, and that to absent herself from him would be like barring out the sunshine.

Gerwyn got tired at last of flicking about the sand. He looked at Colinette, hesitated, then went off and ordered tea. Then he came back, flicked up some more sand, looked again at Colinette, saw that tears were falling upon the open pages of her book, and in an instant Dora's sneer was forgotten and he was by her side, and had clasped her hand in his own.

Colinette did not withdraw her hand, she let it remain passively in his, her whole soul in a tumult the while.

They were seated under the cliff in the centre of the curve of the bay. In front of them was a long stretch of smooth yellow sand, only broken by the shining track of a little fresh-water stream which ran down it into the sea, which lay sparkling, tossing, beyond, as far as the eye could reach.

The tide was coming in with a broad sweep, and waves broke upon the sand in a long unbroken line of foam, reaching from point to point. Sea and sands were flooded with sunshine. The rocks which ran into the water at either point were softened and glorified by a thousand inimitable hues.

But not all the beauty or glory of colour in the world can bring peace to the aching heart. The vivid life and radiance suggested were pain to Colinette whose life lay in the shadows. Suddenly she withdrew her hand from Gerwyn's, and, taking the book from him, she wrote on the fly-leaf with a pencil: "Are you kind to me only because you pity me?" and gave it back to him.

Gerwyn was utterly unprepared for such a question. He looked at her in confusion. The exquisite eyes were fixed upon him, and her soul spoke through them to his. He never meant to say it, but a truth, of which he had been hitherto unconscious, forced itself upon him, and in a low, agitated voice he replied:

"No, but because I love you—I love you." And as he said the words he kissed the hand which bore his ring. Spell-bound, they gazed into each other's eyes.

Dora's voice broke the spell, and, as it struck his ears, the full consciousness of what he had been saying and doing burst upon Gerwyn. He had spoken of love to one who, by reason of her affliction, could never be more to him than a sister, and who should, therefore, have been sacred to him. He had read her heart; he had kissed her hand. He loved her. Oh, he loved her! Could all this be and yet nothing more come of it?

And Dora, what did she think? What was she saying?

That she had seen and heard was evident. In the coldest tones, with averted eyes, she was telling them that the man had prepared their tea, and that they had better take it at once and return home.

It was an uncomfortable tea-party. They sat on the stones, and took it slowly, almost in silence. Dora answered coldly when spoken to, but Gerwyn's best efforts could obtain no more. The walk home was equally silent. Colinette looked white and excited. She was bewildered and could not realise the position at all. Gerwyn loved her, but did he not belong to Dora? Could he stretch out his hand and draw her after him into the sunshine, or would he after all wander forth with Dora, leaving her for ever in the shade?

Mrs. L'Estrange soon perceived that something had gone wrong. Dora was bitterly wounded by the total and unexpected defection of her admirer, and her chagrin was too great to be concealed. Everyone was glad when the evening drew to an end. Dora rose early to go to her room, and was immediately followed by her mother.

An overpowering feeling of shyness came over Colinette when she found herself alone with her lover. She hurriedly put away her work and prepared to leave the room. Gerwyn, leaning against the wall, watched her silently until she came forward and put out her hand by way of bidding him good-night. The sight of her lovely blushing face, the touch of her soft hand were too much for him. He lost his head for the moment, and, forgetting everything, except his own great love for her, he said entreatingly: "Don't go yet, Colinette. Or if you must go, tell me one thing; tell me you love me."

For the moment he had even forgotten that his love was dumb.

It was long since Colinette had made an effort at speech ; she made a desperate one then to answer her lover, but the struggle was unavailing ; only an inarticulate sound broke from her lips. It startled even herself, and ashamed and miserable she turned and fled along the passage and up the stairs.

She paused when she reached the dark upper landing to recover her breath. The door of Dora's room was slightly ajar, and Mrs. L'Estrange was within, talking to her daughter. Her voice reached Colinette clearly, where she stood, each word falling with cruel distinctness upon the ear of the unhappy and involuntary listener.

"No man in his senses would tie himself for life to a dumb woman. If Gerwyn is mad enough to do it, sooner or later he will find himself wretched and remorseful."

Colinette did not wait to hear more. She dragged herself to her room, feeling as though she had received her death warrant.

It was all over. She must give up Gerwyn, there could be no shadow of a doubt about that. The only right and possible path lay before her clear as day.

But how was she to bear it, how tread year after year along that desolate way. Forget him ! No, never. Live without him ! Death would be preferable.

She opened her window and looked out upon the night. A pale moon shone forth occasionally in the dark sky from the midst of fleeting clouds. The roar of the waves filled the room, only broken by the distant sound of the Mixen bell, which ever and anon rang out across the sea.

Colinette had often sat listening to this bell. Its melancholy note had from the first exercised a strange fascination over her. This bell had been placed some fifty years ago upon the dangerous Mixen sand to the south west of the Mumbles Lighthouse, as a warning to sailors in foggy weather. It is fixed in a cage on the top of a buoy with a mushroom anchor, and four large tongues, placed on swivels, beat in the bell as they swing with every motion of the sea. Be the swell from north or south, east or west, the four voices of the bell are never silent, but ever ring out their melancholy warning.

To Colinette's morbid and imaginative mind, it was not an ordinary bell she heard so often at nights, when all but the sea was still. It was the voice of some mysterious spirit which kept for ever calling ; calling her over the sands, across the dark tumultuous waters ; whether in warning or in invitation, she knew not.

Words cannot describe the desolation of the poor dumb girl's soul as she listened to its note this evening, and gazed on the scene before her. It was all dreary. The clouds racing across the dark sky, the heaving mass of waters below, the inky-black rocks in the foreground, the ghostly-looking distant lights of Lundy ; all, all was dreary.

Had she ever been happy? Yes, once very long ago. Like a mirage in the desert, those happy vanished days rose before her. What had ended them? Ah! she remembered. It all flashed back upon her. She was in a big room filled with machinery playing with her little brother Raoul. A great wheel revolved slowly in the middle. Round and round it went; it terrified her; she looked away, only to look round again as an agonized shriek broke upon her ear.

The great wheel was moving slowly, remorselessly upwards, bearing on its terrible spikes her brother Raoul. His yellow curls hung down over his face, his feet banged with a fearful thud against the rafters. She strained every nerve in the effort to shriek for help, but her paralysed tongue refused to do her bidding and left her mute for ever.

She ceased to live on that day. Since then she had only watched. Watched the great wheel of life revolve slowly, bearing remorselessly away from her, parents, country, friends and home. And now, last and most bitter turn of all, Gerwyn. She had nothing left her now, nothing. From that poor tortured heart went forth a mute appeal for help. "Oh, God, comfort me, for I am broken-hearted."

That short inward prayer calmed her a little. She left the window and lay down upon her bed, and at last fell asleep.

In her sleep, comfort came to her in a dream.

In her dream she seemed to awake to find herself still lying upon her bed, but the room, with its open casement and ghostly shadows, had disappeared. Instead she was surrounded by a boundless arch of azure blue.

The roar of the waves was silent, but far away in the blue distance the Mixen bell kept calling, calling. "I am coming, I am coming," she called aloud in answer, and her long silent voice rang out into infinite space, strong and clear, and her body floated off the bed, floated away, floated, floated, on never ending waves of ether.

High overhead, in the vast azure dome, appeared a golden dove, and ever as Colinette gazed upon it, it grew brighter and brighter with a dazzling radiance; and from the radiance emanated a feeling of the most perfect calm, which filled Colinette's spirit with infinite peace. Bathed in radiance, steeped in peace, she floated, floated, all through the night.

The morning sun was streaming in upon her when she awoke, the roar of the waves again filled the room, but the peace of the wonderful dove was still upon her, neither did it leave her. Gerwyn gazed upon her wonderingly when she came down to breakfast; he felt a subtle change in her which seemed to place her beyond his reach.

They all sat together in the glass-room until noon, when Dora declared she should go down and bathe. Gerwyn said at first he should stay up in the house and write letters. The young man's letters, however, could not have been very important, for seeing Colinette

follow Dora down to the beach, he took up his hat and followed her.

The sands were very crowded that morning, chiefly with children and their mothers or nurses. There was a great run upon the tents, which stood about in all directions. Right underneath the big rock, a children's mission service was being held. The children had prepared for it by throwing up in a large circle an embankment of sand, on which they sat crowded together. In the middle stood the preacher with a black bag before him, from which peeped forth coloured pictures and pamphlets. Outside the children's circle, a crowd of grown-up people stood listening.

Colinette paused amongst them as she passed, and Gerwyn came and stood near her.

"Yes, dear children," the preacher was saying, "God has three ways of answering prayer. The first way is: by giving us what we ask for, but by keeping us waiting for it. The second is: by giving us what we ask for at once. The third way is: by giving us far more than we ask for."

He paused; Colinette looked up. Her eyes, which had a solemn look in them, met those of Gerwyn, which were full of love. For a moment her calm deserted her, she flushed up and turned away. "Oh, what," she thought, "can God give me that will ease my pain or comfort me?"

The voice of Mrs. Kyle disturbed her thoughts. "Won't you bathe, my dear? Miss L'Estrange has just gone into the water."

Colinette looked towards the sea, and saw Dora wading out farther than she usually did, her fair bright hair making her easily distinguishable from the other bathers. She nodded an assent, and Mrs. Kyle led her to a tent.

The mission preacher had departed, the little crowd had dispersed, and had flocked down to the edge of the sea to watch the bathers, Gerwyn had left the beach, and gone back to the cottage.

"That fair-headed young lady is very venturesome. See how far she has gone out. It is to be hoped that she can swim," observed one of the spectators. "It is dangerous out there towards the east. Many's the accident I've seen off this beach during the last ten years, all because ——"

The end of her sentence was never finished, for a loud cry from the sea startled her into silence. It came from the fair-headed young lady. The current had swept her beyond her depth, and she was struggling for life in the water, unable to get back into safety. Her screams for help were heartrending.

"She's gone—she's gone," exclaimed a sobbing woman, as a big wave swept over the struggling girl, hiding her for a moment from their view. But the wave passed, and she was still to be seen making desperate efforts to keep afloat, but gradually being carried farther and farther away.



"I AM COMING, I AM COMING," SHE CALLED ALOUD.

Mrs. Kyle at the first alarm had rushed off to fetch Gerwyn, but it would take a few moments to fetch him, and a few moments would end it all. The women began to sob; the men—there were but few—looked around helplessly. Not one, apparently, could swim. Suddenly an excited shout burst from the crowd. Help was at hand.

“Colinette, Colinette,” they cried, and all with one accord swayed back, leaving a clear pathway to the sea.

On she came, running swiftly down the sand in her blue bathing-dress, and with her the people believed came deliverance for Dora. They knew she feared not the water, and fancied she could triumph over the waves.

She paused as she reached the water’s edge, and looked before her with a bewildered expression. The wind blew her long dark hair backwards, the foam crept up and curled around her naked feet, a last cry for help came from the drowning girl, and as it reached Colinette’s ears, her expression changed from bewilderment to horror. Not until that moment had she realised that it was Dora, and that Dora was drowning.

A violent struggle convulsed her features; one terrible effort and she burst the cruel bonds of her silence, and in the hearing of the astonished people broke into speech.

“I am coming, I am coming,” she called aloud, and her long silent voice rang out strong and clear. Then she flung up her arms and dashed into the sea.

She soon reached deep water, and could be seen steadily swimming outwards, cleaving the waves as though they offered no resistance.

Dora had ceased to struggle, had ceased to scream, only now and then could she be seen above water. Would Colinette reach her in time?

No, alas no! when she reached the spot there was no trace of Dora. The waves had triumphed and had borne her under.

A faint exhausted feeling came over Colinette, for the first time in her life a terror of the sea possessed her, but she strove against these feelings and kept swimming around the spot where last she had seen Dora, eagerly scanning the water in every direction for some trace of her. But nowhere, nowhere, was there any sign, and at last Colinette gave up the quest as hopeless. She turned her head towards the shore. How very far away the shore was, and how strangely exhausted she felt. All her strength seemed to have ebbed away. Was there no boat anywhere within call? No; unbroken by sail of boat, or even wing of bird, the great sea lay stretched before her in never ending waves of blue. High overhead shone the golden sun, glowing ever brighter and brighter with a dazzling radiance. Far away in the blue distance could be heard the faint sound of the Mixen bell.

The people on the shore waited anxiously for Colinette to return. They, too, saw the quest was hopeless, and wondered she remained near the spot so long.

But was she remaining near the spot? Was not the distance between her and them ever increasing? What ailed Colinette that she did not return, but was floating, floating, outwards, until at last only her head could be seen a black speck in the distance!

"Colinette, Colinette," they called. But she was gone past recall. She floated towards the east, she floated round the point of the Bay into the golden pathway the sun had thrown across the water; she disappeared.

An appalled silence fell upon the crowd. To watch Dora drown was terrible, but this—this was worse. And who was to break the news to Gerwyn, who now came tearing with headlong speed down the cliff side and across the sand towards them, closely followed by Mrs. Kyle.

"Am I too late? where is Dora?" he asked, panting for breath.

"Too late, sir. The poor young lady has gone down," answered a man; but his voice choked; he could not tell the rest.

"And Colinette went in to save her, and is drowned too," piped forth a small boy, with the unconscious cruelty of a child.

"What?" shouted Gerwyn in a tone of such agony that no one ever forgot it, whilst his face turned white as death.

"Too true, sir," now said the first speaker. "She must have become exhausted, for she drifted out to sea; and the last we saw was her body floating round the corner."

"And if she was floating when she went round the corner," cried Mrs. Kyle excitedly, "she's floating still. I'll never believe my pretty darling is drowned; she is too much at home in the water. Look here, sir; you hurry across those rocks, so as to cut off the point of the bay, and may be you'll see her, and you'll save her yet. Here, Tom, show him the quickest way across, and help him all you can."

Gerwyn was off like an arrow from a bow. There was no need to ask Tom for his services. Every man pressed eagerly forward, all anxious to help, now the way was shown.

They were a marvellously short time making their way over the rocks. Gerwyn was the first to reach the sea on the other side of the point. He jumped on a boulder, over which the waves were breaking, and turning his back on Langland, anxiously searched the wide waste of waters before him.

There was no sign of any living thing. Gerwyn felt as if his heart were breaking.

"Colinette!" he cried, and all the pent-up anguish of his soul burst forth in that cry. The noise of the waves breaking against the rocks confused him so he could not be certain, yet it seemed to him as though a voice from the sea answered him ctying faintly, "Here."

He turned, for the voice seemed to come from behind him, and there,—oh, joy inexpressible!—was Colinette, drifting towards him.

The race over the rocks had been quicker than the journey over the waves. Colinette was keeping herself afloat by slow, exhausted

motions. Gerwyn only reached her just in time. She was unconscious when he brought her on to the shore, but her marble features wore an expression at which her lover marvelled. It was as though just before her spirit wandered away into the realms of unconsciousness, it had whispered to her some delightful secret, which had brought her rapture even when death was staring her in the face.

It was impossible to carry Colinette over the rocks, but Gerwyn, aided by a stalwart fisherman, managed to convey her up the sloping cliff-side and home over the hill, having first wrapped her in a blanket, which the ever ready Mrs. Kyle had brought upon the scene.

"You leave her to me," said that good woman, when they reached the house. "I know what to do, and she'll soon come round ; it's only a faint ; the fright and excitement did her more harm than the water, I'll be bound."

So Gerwyn very reluctantly left her to the care of the woman, and went to console, as best he could, the poor bereaved mother.

Mrs. Kyle was right, Colinette soon "came round," but she was pronounced very weak, and Gerwyn was not allowed to see her that evening. He fancied the maids seemed flustered and unwilling to answer when he questioned them about her, as though they were afraid of telling him something they ought not, so he was infinitely relieved when the next morning one of them came and said Colinette was feeling much stronger and would like to see him.

He found her lying on a sofa, which had been wheeled to the open window. She looked very weak, and there were traces of tears on her face, for she had been weeping for Dora, but Gerwyn again noticed the look of suppressed rapture he had first seen on her face when he brought her out of the water. He took her hands, and gazed into her eyes as if he would read her very soul, too moved at first to speak.

"Colinette," he said at last, "do you remember the words of the mission preacher? I prayed then that you might be given to me, and you were given to me from out of the jaws of the sea. You are mine now, my darling ; nothing need divide us if we love each other."

Colinette shook her head, and laid her finger, with an expressive gesture upon her lips.

"I would rather marry you, mute as you are," answered Gerwyn, divining her thoughts, "than any other woman in the universe."

An ineffable smile broke out over Colinette's face. Then what seemed to Gerwyn, little less than a miracle happened. Colinette answered him in a clear voice.

"Nothing need divide us," she said, "for I have been given more, far more, than I asked for. Gerwyn, I have been given back my speech !"

HELEN PROTHERO LEWIS.

A NIGHT IN THE SUBURBS.

IT was one of the hottest evenings of July. I had obtained three days' leave up from Shorncliffe, and having got through two of them with considerable satisfaction to myself, I was standing on the steps of my Club in Piccadilly lighting a cigarette.

My whole moral nature was steeped in that sweetness and light which is shed over the soul by a recent and admirable dinner, and I had promised myself an evening at the Gaiety, where I should be certain to meet a dozen people that I knew. What could man—especially over-worked soldier man—desire more?

It was a little early for the theatre, so I thought I would stroll along for a few minutes before calling a hansom. Hardly had I moved two steps along the pavement, when I felt a gentle pull at the tails of my evening coat. Now it was rather a sore point with me that my dust coat was just a degree too short to conceal those appendages. I said to myself: "It's that ass Raynor playing the wag, I saw him leaving the club just now;" and I turned round and was beginning with some fervour to observe, "What the ——" when I saw that my assailant was not the facetious Raynor. In fact, for an instant I saw no one; but then, lowering my eyes almost to the level of the insulted tails of my coat, I perceived a little girl of about seven years old looking at me with frightened and yet appealing eyes.

She was charmingly dressed in a sort of Kate Greenaway costume, and though I am not strong in the details of children's clothing, I saw at once that she was not a common child.

She was making strenuous efforts to keep back the tears which stood in her big brown eyes, and when I asked her what was the matter, it took a struggle before she could control her voice and say:

"Oh, please, Mr. Gentleman, do you know where papa is?"

"Where did you see him last?" I said, parrying one question with another.

"He left me at the door of a shop down there, and I saw some soldiers and runned after them, and now I can't find papa."

Here the tears came down in earnest, and the last syllable of "papa" was prolonged into a wail which had the effect of adding at least six persons to the little crowd which was collecting around us.

"Well, do you know where your papa lives?" I said.

"Oh, yes; he lives in West Tensington; number 31, X——Terrace."

Here at all events was something definite. I felt considerably relieved.

"Very well," I said; "I will just pop you into a cab, and before you know where you are, you will find yourself at home. Hansom!"

But at this suggestion, the child's tears redoubled. From comparatively subdued sobbing, she began absolutely to howl. The fickle mob, who had hitherto watched the proceedings in approving silence, now began to express a contrary opinion.

A hansom drove up, and I again tried to induce the child to get in alone. But it was hopeless : she clung to me, and cried so piteously, and looked so pretty withal, that I at last had to relent, and, getting into the hansom, resignedly gave the man the address the child had given me, while a faint cheer rose from the audience on the pavement as we drove off.

"Here's a pretty mess," I thought disconsolately to myself. "I shall lose the first act at the Gaiety. Bother the child ! If those confounded coat tails of mine had not shown, I don't believe it would have occurred to her to take any notice of me" (in which supposition, however, I was wrong, as after events will show). "And to waste my last evening in town in doing amateur collector to an Orphan's Home !" I concluded, with concentrated bitterness.

But it was too late to grumble. By this time we were speeding down the interminable Cromwell Road. I looked at my little companion, and found she had gone to sleep.

She looked so pretty, with her pale, tired little face, framed by the big poke-bonnet, that I felt my heart softening again. I always was rather a fool where women and children, especially pretty ones, are concerned.

There ! a church clock somewhere struck eight, I might as well make the best of a bad job ; so I lighted another cigarette and smoked patiently as we drove through street after street, of none of which I had ever even heard the names.

At last my driver pulled up and asked the way of a monumental-looking policeman, who was the only live thing in sight, and had the air of having stood in that lonely place for years.

"Third to the right, second to the left," said the monument.

We drove on.

When we finally found ourselves in X—— Terrace, it struck me as being the most forsaken place I had ever seen. The houses were good enough, but they all appeared to be uninhabited, and presented that dismal wall-eyed look conferred by patches of chalk in the centre of each pane.

The rough, reddish gravel of the road looked as if ours were the first wheels that had been over it : the edges of the stones in the pavement showed clean and sharp, with hardly any dust in the interstices. Number 13 was an end house, and beyond it heaps of bricks, lime and rough stone proclaimed that further building operations were being carried on.

I jumped out and rang the bell, and then lifted the little girl up the steps. As I did so, the door opened and I saw a man's figure standing in the doorway. With a cry of delight, the child ran into

his arms, and in the ecstasy of their mutual greeting I was forgotten.

However, in a moment the gentleman advanced to me with both hands outstretched. "How can I ever thank you my dear Sir? I have only now returned home, from a hopeless search for my darling, on the chance that she might have made her own way here: and I was just setting forth, half frantic, on the same errand, when——"

Here I contrived to interrupt the flow of his gratitude.

"Not at all—not at all," I stammered.—"Pray don't mention it.—Very glad to be of any service.—Afraid I must be off now as I have an engagement."

But here he in his turn interrupted me.

"What! Go away at once without even giving my wife time to thank you! Impossible! I cannot allow it. Let me entreat of you to come in, if only for five minutes. You will not surely refuse us the trifling satisfaction of thanking the benefactor to whom we owe our little Nina's safety!"

There was an effusiveness about his manner that struck me as not being quite sincere, but I felt I should have to submit. There seemed no help for it. It certainly had a rather brutal effect, depositing the child like a pre-paid parcel, and then driving off, ungraciously refusing all thanks.

So I paid the cabman, and reluctantly followed the gentleman and the little girl into the house.

Once inside the door, the aspect of things seemed to change. Instead of the raw desolation which reigned without, I found everything elaborately well-appointed and comfortable: the little terra-cotta-coloured hall had nice prints on its walls: portières hung before the doors. I was taking note of all these things, being one who rather fancies his taste in decoration, and was admiring an old-fashioned hanging lamp at the foot of the stairs, when Nina's father turned to me and with a smile said:

"But here I am, taking you in to introduce you to my wife, and we neither of us know the other's name."

"My name is Redmond Crane," I said, producing a card.

"And mine, John Crawshay." As he spoke, he was standing almost under the lamp, and I saw him practically for the first time.

He was dressed in black. A shortish, slight man, with long arms and hands, very sloping shoulders and a long, thin neck. His head was small and ill-shaped, large behind and low and flat in front; his hair was thin and reddish, and his forehead projected very much over a pair of small, narrow, brown eyes, which were not improved by the redness of the lids and the almost total lack of either brows or lashes. The mouth and jaws, which were large, were half hidden by a scattered, weak-looking moustache and beard. When he smiled, I saw a row of pointed yellow teeth.

"Altogether as treacherous-looking an individual as I ever saw," I thought to myself as I followed him upstairs.

At the drawing-room door, we met Mrs. Crawshay. A tall, dark woman, the very opposite to her husband.

She received Nina with far less effusion than he had shown. She carried the child into another room, and in a few minutes returned to the drawing-room where Mr. Crawshay and I had seated ourselves. She was distinctly a good-looking woman. Thin and sallow, but with good features and curiously long, glittering dark eyes.

I did not care for the looks of either of the pair. They, on the contrary, appeared to be much interested in me. While I was speaking to one, the eyes of the other seemed to be appraising me from head to foot, though if I turned my head, the glance was furtively shifted to another part of the room.

I was getting nervous and fidgetty under this scrutiny. An indefinable sense of distrust and fear of both husband and wife filled my mind.

Like most other people now-a-days, I had tried my hand both at thought-reading and thought-willing. In the former capacity especially, I was regarded by my friends as a kind of show performer. Only the preceding evening, I had been subjected to some crucial tests in which my susceptibility to the will of the operator had rather alarmed me, although it had delighted my audience.

It now seemed to me that Mrs. Crawshay's glances were gradually assuming the fixed character of the gaze of a person who is trying to impose her will upon another's: and anxious as I was to get away, I was conscious of some restraining influence that seemed to paralyse my powers of action.

Mr. Crawshay had been keeping up a desultory flow of conversation, and I had with some difficulty been making suitable replies, when he chanced to mention a classical concert to which I had gone a few nights before.

"My husband was playing in the orchestra," said Mrs. Crawshay, lifting for an instant her sombre eyes. "He plays the 'cello rather better than most amateurs."

I was interested at once, and forgot my wish to leave the house as soon as possible. Music is my greatest weakness. I am the victim of a mad desire to subjugate the violin, and any stringed instrument has a special fascination for me. As Mrs. Crawshay spoke, my eyes, which had gradually become accustomed to the red gloom caused by two shaded lamps, fell on a violoncello case beneath a piano at the back of the room.

All my distrust of the uncanny couple vanished; I begged to be allowed to hear some music.

"I get so little good music in the regiment," I urged, "it would really be a great treat if you would play something for me before I go away."

After a very little hesitation, they complied with my request. The violoncello was produced and tuned with the piano, and presently the pair were playing a charming little "Wiegen-lied" of Häuser's, which I had never before heard on the 'cello, although I had myself often attempted its life on the violin.

It was a desperately hot night. I leaned back in my chair, listening to the music and feeling perfectly happy.

"Certainly," I thought, "whoever that fellow is, he plays right well," and I opened my eyes to watch his hands.

I almost started from my chair. They looked as though they had been dipped in blood! A large jewel on the little finger of the right hand shot angry crimson flashes across the room at me. The heavy, full notes, as they dropped lingeringly from the bow, seemed to fall like drops of blood.

The very atmosphere was charged with some vague horror and seemed to weigh me down.

I could see the small eyes of the man fixed upon me.

The room seemed whirling round me. A red glare throbbed and thickened before my eyes.

Through it, I could only distinguish the crouching figure of Mr. Crawshay. What was that he held in his hand? A knife? He made a sudden movement, I heard a low sobbing cry ——

"Good Heavens," I thought, "am I going mad?" With an effort I struggled out of the soft, low chair to my feet.

The music stopped. The two players rose. I saw that the red shade of the lamps must have caused the strange effect I noticed on Mr. Crawshay's hands, and, feeling ashamed of myself for the abrupt way in which I had interrupted the music, I apologised by saying that it had got very late, and, as I had a long way to go, I thought I had better say good-bye and try and find a cab.

My hosts looked dubiously at each other. Mr. Crawshay stepped to the window and drew aside the curtain.

"This is a difficult place to get a cab," he said, "and I see that the storm which has been threatening all the evening has begun."

It was quite true. I heard the heavy drops come splashing down one by one, and a low grumble of thunder gave additional warning of the coming storm.

My heart sank, but I said with more confidence than I felt, "Oh, I told the fellow who drove me here to wait for me. I am sure it is all right. Good-night, Mrs. Crawshay," and I proceeded to make some civil remarks about the music, to which she responded with further gratitude on the subject of my recovery of Nina.

In the meantime, Mr. Crawshay had left the room; in a minute or two he returned, saying that the cab was nowhere to be seen.

"I am not surprised that the man did not wait," he continued; "the rain is coming down in torrents and the night is as black as ink. I really think, if you will condescend to accept our poor hospitality,

you had better spend the night here. Even by daylight, you would find a difficulty in making your way on foot from here, and it would be madness to attempt to do so at this hour of the night and during the full fury of such a storm as is raging now. And," he added, "in addition to these very tangible reasons for remaining, I can assure you that nothing could possibly give my wife and myself more pleasure than to feel that we were able in any way to be of service to the preserver of our child."

Mrs. Crawshay did not speak, but watched me from between her narrowed eyelids.

I looked from one to the other, hesitating.

Again that horrible red mist seemed to fill the room, and I felt weighed down by an indescribable sense of depression and fatigue.

There seemed a spark of fire in Mrs. Crawshay's glittering eyes, which were fixed upon me with insistent intentness.

My head swam. My knees were trembling. I felt for a moment as if I should have fallen : and then, by no conscious effort of volition on my part, I turned to Mr. Crawshay and said, "Thanks, I will accept your offer."

My mental faculties seemed numbed. I felt as if my brain was in the grasp of a hot, strong hand ; strive as I might to collect my ideas, nothing but the two words "Stay here," would keep forcing themselves, with monotonous power, like the blows of a hammer, upon my consciousness.

Anything to get relief from this surging, overpowering pressure upon my brain. "Yes," I repeated stupidly ; "I will stay here—I will stay here."

Mrs. Crawshay gave a movement which looked almost like one of relief, and glanced towards her husband. The latter turned to me, and, with what seemed to my excited eyes a sinister smile, said :

"And now, Mr. Crane, permit me to show you to your room."

My power of will had returned, and with it all my original feeling of repugnance to staying in the house ; but at the same time I realized the difficulty of any alternative proceeding. In that raw, half-grown suburb I might wander all night without meeting any human being, much less a cab. Deafening peals of thunder and the ceaseless rush of rain warned me that the storm was at its height and would render all attempts at walking well nigh an impossibility.

"I am in for it now," I thought. "I suppose I must make the best of a bad job ; but I wonder if that woman knew how queer she made me feel just now."

So thinking, I said good-night to my mysterious hostess, and followed her husband out of the room.

He led the way to a small room just behind the drawing-room ; standing at the door, he cast a quick, searching glance round it.

"Ah ! Everything quite right, I see. Good-night, Mr. Crane ; you look tired, and I hope you will sleep well."

"No doubt of that," I responded, taking my candle from him; and touching with considerable disgust, his long, damp, bony hand, I went into the room and shut the door.

It was a nice little room, furnished with the same good taste that had been displayed in the rest of the house. I walked to the chimney-board and put my candle down. The night had got closer and closer. The window of the room was shut, and the effect of the thunderstorm had been to make the air heavy and oppressive.

Besides that, there was a peculiar smell in the room, a half-stifling or choking sensation over and above the heaviness of the overcharged atmosphere.

Suddenly it recalled to me a week I had once spent in the New Forest of Hampshire with an old chum: one of the happiest weeks of my life; for we had wandered day after day through forest glades, and made friends with the stags, and—I fear—longed for a license that we might shoot the beautiful creatures.

Here during this week, we had occasionally wandered into the huts of the charcoal burners, and made friends with the poor, simple folk, and got to be quite learned and interested in their Bohemian or gipsy existence. But every time we entered a hut, we were greeted with a suffocating smell of charcoal, unbearable to our sensitive nerves, but imperceptible to theirs.

And now once more I was greeted with this suffocating sense, and the whole of that week, long gone by, passed before me as in a phantasmagoria. What was it? What could it mean? Where did it come from?

The chimney was boarded up, and I felt that I should like to put my foot through the papered canvass and let in a little air down the chimney. Better to open the window and let in air that way, in spite of the storm.

Of course the dressing-table was in front of the window, and the looking-glass, as is usual in such cases, seemed attached to it by a hair-trigger, ready to go off at a moment's notice. But I was determined upon having fresh air. After a slight contest with the dressing-table and a series of protesting leaps from the looking-glass, as I jerked the table along the floor, I succeeded in opening the casement.

As I did so, I heard Mr. Crawshay and his wife leaving the drawing-room. She passed on upstairs, and he paused for a second to tap at my door, saying:

"Everything quite comfortable, I hope?" before he followed her.

Everything certainly had been provided for me, even to a clean night-shirt, tidily laid out on the bed. My hands had got rather dusty in opening the window, and I poured out some water and began to wash them.

Everyone knows the peculiar spirit of evil which animates a piece of soap. As I tried to replace my bit of Brown Windsor in its dish, it gave a dexterous wriggle and sprang out of my hand on to the

floor. It fell on the shining wooden border of the little room, and with the grace which marks the movements of soap when temporarily released from bondage, it slid along the floor and finally concealed itself under the bed.

I took my candle off the chimney-board, and kneeling down, lifted the white valance which hung from the lower part of the bed to the ground. As I did so, an indescribable feeling of horror came upon me. I felt myself growing rigid with a quite unaccountable terror, and I seemed to hear Mrs. Crawshay's voice repeating the words that I had felt, rather than heard her say, while waiting in the drawing-room :

"Stay here ! Stay here !"

Why did she wish me to stay here ?

As the words passed through my mind, an idea at once terrible and over-mastering took possession of me. With a ghastly sense of knowing beforehand what I was going to see, I lowered the light and looked under the bed.

At first I could only distinguish a dim outline ; but holding the light more closely, I realised the truth of my sudden suspicion, for I saw lying there the dead body of a man.

At once, by inspiration as it were, the truth flashed upon me. I had been entrapped into a den of thieves, nay murderers, and my own life was threatened. Now the smell of charcoal was accounted for. This man had evidently been suffocated by its fumes, and had so passed away from life into the sleep of death.

Probably I had arrived at the house before the evil deed could be put out of sight ; or something had arrested them in their work, and here for the time being the body had been placed.

It seemed singular that they should have put me into the same room, with the chance of discovering their crime ; but I felt that any rash attempt at escape on my part would only bring me to a more violent end. They were tolerably safe.

Was I, too, to be suffocated by the fumes of charcoal ?

A curious calm came over me. My brain ceased to whirl and swim ; my heart, which had been throbbing in violent bounds, began to beat regularly. My sight cleared, and I could look dispassionately at the victim of what, I had no doubt, was a treacherous, deliberate murder.

As I recollected that I must on no account allow the Crawshays to know that I had made any unexpected discovery, I moved noisily about the room while undressing myself. I must then get into bed, feign sleep, and, for a time, await results.

The window as a means of exit was impracticable. For a moment I entertained the idea of making a dash for the hall-door, but I did not know how many of the gang might be concealed in the house, and unarmed as I was, I should stand a very poor chance of getting away alive if my attempted escape was discovered. It was clear I

should have to trust to my wits, and not my muscles, to get me out of my difficulties.

I had no time to deliberate or wait for a better plan to occur to me. I felt that moments were precious. I closed the window, placed about ten pounds in gold upon the dressing-table, undressed and got into bed.

The minutes stole on to what seemed hours. I confess that I grew stiff and faint from the horror of my position. I could hear my heart beat. I had before now faced the enemy in the field without the slightest emotion. This somehow was altogether a different matter.

Probably not more than an hour had passed, when I heard a slight creak. My heart stood still. Then another creak, and the door was silently pushed open and a head cautiously looked in. I feigned the loud and regular breathing of sleep.

A figure moved across the room to the dressing-table and quietly took up the gold that lay upon it. Then it moved towards the bed and I could almost feel the breath of my horrible host upon my cheek, as he peered down upon me. Another moment and I believe I should have betrayed myself, when he carefully moved away.

Then I heard a whispered conversation outside; next a large pan of smouldering charcoal was quietly placed inside the room and the door was closed. Then I heard an ascent to the next floor, and Mr. and Mrs. Crawshay had evidently retired for the night.

I lay still until the stifling fumes could be borne no longer, and then got out of bed and quietly opened the window.

For a long time occasional footsteps and voices told me that the Crawshays were still awake. But at length all sounds ceased. I crept out. The heat of the night, the want of air had made me sick and giddy. I could hardly stand. I put my head into the basin where I had washed my hands, and drank a little water out of the carafe on the table.

It revived me. I dressed myself, and with my boots in my hand, set forth on my perilous journey downstairs.

The gas on the landing had only been turned down, so there was fortunately light enough to see where I was going. I was stealing down the first flight of stairs, when my foot struck against something round. It was a child's indiarubber ball, and to my unspeakable horror, I heard it go bounding down the stairs. If anything roused Crawshay, I was a dead man. I crouched in the folds of the portière which hung before little Nina's door, until the ball, after what seemed an endless succession of bumps, reached the hall. I could hear the child talking and crying in her sleep. What if she were to awake and disturb the house? Then a cuckoo clock, with much preliminary whirring, struck three. I never before appreciated the bitterness of my loathing for a cuckoo clock. But at last all was still again. I emerged from the portière, and with even more caution than before,

I stole downstairs. Thank goodness the hall door was only fastened by a chain ! With fingers that would shake in spite of me, I undid it. Noiselessly I drew back the handle of the lock, and I was safe in the open air at last.

The storm was rolling away and the rain had all but stopped. Presently the faintest light began to show in the east, and by it I directed my general course, feeling all the romance in prosaic London of steering like a wandering Arab by the dawn.

At last a cab hove in sight. I made frantic signals of distress. They were recognised, and in a short time I was on my way to Scotland Yard, whither I determined to go at once, so as to lose no time in apprising the authorities of all that had occurred.

The police investigations showed that the poor fellow was not the first who had been decoyed to his death by little Nina's tears. The child had been carefully trained to try and excite the sympathies of well-dressed young men only, and was an important factor in her parents' method of earning their livelihood.

As for Mrs. Crawshay's mesmeric powers, I have no doubt that she often employed them in coercing victims who, like myself, were unwilling to remain in her house. In my case, she was forced to exert them very strongly, as my unconscious reading of her thoughts, while she and her husband were playing, had awakened in me a desire to escape which required all her strength of will to subdue. However, the very sensitiveness which told in my favour in the one case, acted against me in the other, and I have since given up the cultivation of a faculty, which seems to me, of very doubtful benefit.

I will not enter into all the details of the trial that ensued.

This is a true story. Although I have disguised names and localities, in the main outlines I have adhered to fact ; and anyone who wishes for fuller particulars can obtain them by searching the police reports of the year 1871. Suffice it, therefore, to say that my evidence, combined with the clearest circumstantial proofs of his guilt, convicted John Crawshay of wilful murder, and he was sentenced to be hanged—a punishment which, in my humble opinion, was too good for him.

Mrs. Crawshay narrowly escaped the same fate, but, as nothing transpired to show that she was implicated in the actual murder, she received the mitigated sentence of transportation for life.

My regiment was soon afterwards ordered abroad, and as it was some years before I was home again, I never heard of the ultimate fate of little Nina. Ever since this adventure, I have fled from a lost child as from a mad dog, and I have given up thought-reading and taken to novels.

E. C. SOMERVILLE.

THE BANSHEE: A Fact.

"'Twas the banshee's lonely wailing,
Well I knew the voice of death,
On the night-wind slowly sailing,
O'er the bleak and gloomy heath."



HEN a boy of about eight years of age, I was staying for a few months at an old house in a northern county of Ireland. The place belonged to a Mr. Tom Kreane, who had married a sister of my father's mother, and had been in possession of the family upwards of two hundred years.

The external appearance of the house itself was unpretending ; so devoid of architectural beauty, that even to my childish fancy it seemed a very ugly structure. It was a nearly square block, having a hall-door within a porch raised some few steps above the level of the gravelled carriage-drive. Oblong windows on each side of the entrance porch, and a painfully regular row of exactly similar windows above them, topped by two or three smaller in the roof and some hideous chimney-stacks, impressed one with the idea that the practical architect had had nothing in view except the rapid completion of a solid, time-enduring and weather-proof edifice raised in those troubled times when William of Orange found it desirable to drive the ex-King James and his French legion out of the Green Isle. Within, however, the rooms were of sufficient size and comfortable, with handsome old furniture and thick warm carpeting.

Just under the roof were attic-chambers, in one of which, amidst much uninteresting lumber, were some finely-finished swords and rapiers. I remember my cousin explaining how these weapons, discoloured with blood stains from tip to hilt, and somewhat damaged by hard use, had done their work at the Boyne river and other engagements towards the close of the 17th century. Two or three of them were of French make and highly wrought ; these had been wrested by some of our forefathers from the French foe.

The site of the house, too, had been well chosen : on rising ground, embracing a far and wide view over a rich, well-cultivated and varied tract of country, it never failed to charm ; and the long avenue leading up from the high road was bordered with fine old trees that terminated in a grove not far from the eastern end of the house which faced the south.

As well as I can recollect, the old gentleman and his only son were

away in the neighbouring town at the hour the strange event I am about to narrate occurred. My grand-aunt was confined to her room through ill-health, but one of my aunts was a visitor there, and looked after the household duties at the time for the indisposed mistress.

If not wandering about the grounds, fields or bogs, I used to delve in the bog lands for bits of old wood, which I fondly imagined were bog-oak, and, indeed, perhaps some of them were. My chief amusement was teaching a highly intelligent genet some new trick or other. He was quite at home when told to pick up a handkerchief and bring it to you or to open a gate ; but my ambition was to make him at least as clever as a circus pony I had once seen performing strange antics before a crowded and admiring assembly.

It was an afternoon in early spring, and growing dusk. Not a breath of wind stirred the leafless branches of the big trees in the grove, towering skywards and looking weirdly grand in the last gleams of the sinking sun. Boy-like, I was keeping a watchful eye on a flock of geese headed by a pugnacious and tough old gander who was peculiarly hostile to me, and would often make me beat a hasty retreat when, in a mischievous mood, I sometimes shied pebbles at him or feigned an attack with a bristly blackthorn. However, on this occasion the gander disappeared quietly with his dames round the end of an outhouse.

The shades of evening were swiftly deepening, and unbroken silence reigned. The lowing of cattle, bleating of sheep, the neighing of the horses—in a word, every sound familiar to a farm-yard was strangely hushed.

Feeling suddenly chilled, I was turning to enter the house when the mysterious stillness was broken by a low, awe-inspiring moan. My feet became glued to the soil. Instinctively I glanced timidly upwards towards the lofty tree-tops whence the wail came floating down, swelling out more plaintively and fully into a sobbing shriek of anguish that filled all space around, as, wave-like, it swept past me in the air, then slowly lessening into wild and bitter keening, died away gently at last in the immeasurable distance.

With an effort, terrified and awe-struck, I broke away and fled through the central passage of the house into the front hall, whence I saw through the wide open entrance-door giving on to the lawn my aunt, rushing, pale and frightened of aspect, across the carriage-drive.

“Oh ! Aunt Mary ! What was that dreadful sound ?” I cried.

“Hush !” returned my aunt with awe-stricken visage. “Then you heard it, too ? It is the Banshee !” was her reply.

We were quickly surrounded by a sobbing, wondering, chattering group of domestics and farm-servants. One very ancient dame asserted positively that she had seen the dim, impalpable outline of the “White Fairy,”* with her long dishevelled tresses and fluttering

* The Banshee is sometimes named “White Fairy” by the peasants.

cloak, hovering near the grove at the same instant we had heard the mournful wail ; but at the sight she covered her face and fled to the house. And she added sadly :

“’Tis poor Mr. Robert’s doom. He’ll ne’er live through this night.”

For the Irish peasantry believe the Banshee follows certain families and that she is heard to utter plaintive lamentations near their dwellings after dark shortly before any male member of the family dies. I have never heard or read of the Banshee wailing over the approaching decease of a female member. The peasants say also that only ancient or noble families are honoured by this fairy. I am under the impression the majority of the families which the Banshee is said to follow belong to the southern parts of Ireland.

It may be observed in the several written accounts of the Banshee’s manifestations, that the general features in all instances of the keening and of the appearing of the fairy agree very closely ; whereas the lesser details, such as the time and manner of the appearing, and the fashion of the long hair, and of the cloak or mantle, vary considerably.

Against the gloomy prophecy of the old dame, not a dissentient voice was raised, but many tears were shed and lamentations uttered.

Now Mr. Robert Kreane was the elder brother of my grand-uncle, and had been thrown by a fiery young horse when riding a few days previously. He had been warned not to ride this animal, as it was not thoroughly broken in and was very restive, but although upwards of eighty years of age, he could not desist from his old and loved habits of training his own horses. Being a man then of somewhat heavy weight, the fall had given him a violent shaking, yet no danger to his life was apprehended by anyone in his brother’s house until the woeful warning of the Banshee startled all.

Messengers were immediately dispatched to Mr. Robert’s house, about two miles distant. The first returned with the sad news that about half past five o’clock a change for the worse had suddenly set in, and the last announced that he passed away between three and four o’clock in the morning.

There is a saying in the family that never a Kreane dies without the Banshee’s warning.

This incident is fact ; the names only have been altered.

I am not superstitious, yet have never forgotten the circumstances nor the awesome fear that penetrated my very being at the mournful wail heard by me some five-and-twenty years ago. I felt then, as I feel now, that it certainly came from no earthly source.

THE WIDOWS' ADONIS.

FITZGERALD BRANDON was one of the lucky mortals treated with maternal partiality by that fickle jade, Fortune. No step-dame frowns fell to his share, no chilling glances, no rebuffs. Everything went well with him.

Did he speculate imprudently, the speculation, however unpromising, was certain to do well ; did he back a rank outsider for a great race, it was almost certain of a place. Fortune always befriended him. He generally rose a winner from his post-prandial rubber, not because his skill was extraordinary, but from sheer force of luck ; and it was on record that on one occasion he broke the bank at Monte Carlo.

He was, besides, extremely handsome, though on a liliputian scale ; for Fitzgerald Brandon was not only one of the luckiest but also one of the smallest of men. He stood just five feet five in his boots, but his neat little figure, always dressed in the most perfectly-fitting chefs-d'œuvre of Smalpage or Poole, was so erect, so dapper and so well-proportioned, that any shortcomings of stature were readily forgiven and forgotten by his numerous admirers of the fair sex. For, whatever the lady-novelists may say, women are not so utterly devoted to those lords of herculean build and superhuman physical strength who invariably figure in the pages of fashionable fiction.

Little Fitz was, in his way, quite a lady-killer, and as he was well-known to be a rich as well as a lucky man, his lines generally fell in very pleasant places. His position in society was assured, and many a fair demoiselle moving in the very best circles would have been willing enough to share his fortunes.

But little Fitz seemed reluctant to don the matrimonial fetters ; he eschewed the society of the demoiselle à marier, preferring the maturer charms of ladies who already wore the marriage ring and yet could enjoy a flirtation without fear of scandal. In short, little Fitz was a devoted admirer of that privileged class, young and pretty widows.

Perhaps he fondly imagined he was less likely to be " caught " by these bereaved sirens than by young débutantes still under the maternal wing. At all events he was nearly always to be seen with one or other of these fair ladies, who, having doffed their weeds, had bloomed out again in all their pristine brilliancy.

And that is how he won the soubriquet by which he was known in every club in London, of " The Widows' Adonis."

" Just look at the fellow ! How any woman can take up with such a conceited little coxcomb, *I* can't imagine," said Maitland, of the 50th Dragoons—a " heavy " dragoon in more senses than one, for he rode fourteen stone, and was more remarkable for breadth of shoulder than quickness of wit—to his *fidus Achates* one morning in the Row.

"There's no accounting for tastes," muttered the other, pulling his moustache and darting envious glances at little Fitz, who was seated between two of the prettiest young widows in London and seemed mightily to relish the position. "I should have thought a charming woman like Mrs. Desmond ——" He did not finish the sentence but glared fiercely at the dapper figure of little Fitz, who was laughing and chatting gaily to his fair companions. If looks could kill, what wholesale slaughter would go on in this highly civilised metropolis of ours.

Jack Carnforth, the impecunious offshoot of an ancient family tree, would have given a good deal to secure pretty Mrs. Desmond and her fortune, which was said to be considerable. At one time, she had accepted his homage with apparent pleasure, but since Fitzgerald Brandon had crossed her path, she had turned a deaf ear to the penniless young attaché's pretty speeches. Poor Carnforth, in spite of his good looks, felt that he was hopelessly out of the running, for, though Brandon might be, as Maitland said, "a conceited little coxcomb," it was impossible to deny that he possessed the art of making himself agreeable.

The two ladies, between whom this miniature Paris was seated, were as antagonistic to each other as Maitland and Carnforth were to the object of their rivalry; for the two pretty widows *were* rivals, and hated each other cordially, though they called each other "dear Minna" and "dear Clementina," and before the eyes of the world posed as great friends and allies.

In appearance, the two ladies contrasted well, and each flattered herself that her friend was an excellent foil to her own charms. Minna Desmond was a tall, handsome brunette, with fine eyes and magnificent black hair, while Clementina Somers was a fairy-like blonde, with a dazzling complexion, bright blue eyes and a chevelure of the most beautiful—dye; at least so her "dear Minna" said. Both were reputed to be wealthy and acknowledged to be charming, and both were bent on securing the affection of that fortunate individual, "the Widows' Adonis."

"Pshaw!" muttered Carnforth, as he watched the trio. "I suppose his money is the attraction."

"Of course it is! You don't think any woman would admire his looks, do you?" retorted Maitland, squaring his broad shoulders and arranging the gardenia in his button-hole. "Women are always mercenary," he added, with a sigh.

He had only a couple of hundred a-year and his pay. A good matrimonial venture would have set him firmly on his financial feet again, for it would have enabled him to bid defiance to a certain Jew money-lender who held more of his "paper" than he cared to think of. Besides, he really admired Mrs. Somers, and it enraged him to see her show this marked preference for Brandon.

Meanwhile the latter, in serene unconsciousness of the wrath he

was rousing in two manly bosoms, was thoroughly enjoying himself. The old adage did not hold good for once ; he found three excellent company. He admired both his fair companions, and their all but open rivalry lent a delightful piquancy to their conversation. Each was so anxious to outshine the other that their talk was almost brilliant, and little Fitz was kept well amused. Like many men who are not remarkable for wit, he admired women who could skilfully use that essentially feminine weapon, the tongue ; nothing charmed him more than a ready retort or a neat epigram ; and even satire, if not levelled against himself, pleased him.

That morning both ladies had hoped to secure him for an hour's chat ; it was unfortunate that the hopes of both should be fulfilled and yet baffled. Minna wished to have him all to herself ; it was really most provoking that Clementina's wishes clashed with hers.

"Are you going to Mrs. Eaton's this afternoon ?" asked the latter, in the soft lisping tones her friend stigmatised as "absurdly affected," but which many people thought charming.

"Yes—that is if you and Mrs. Desmond will be there," replied the gallant little man promptly.

Mrs. Somers's blue eyes clouded. This was not at all what she wanted. Minna's face brightened : evidently Brandon did not care much for dear Clementina's society.

"Yes, I shall certainly go," she said, shedding her brightest smile on Fitz. "I thought, Clementina, you meant to drive out to Richmond to call on old Lady Merryweather," she added sweetly, at the same time darting a half-defiant glance across at Clementina.

"To Richmond !" echoed the other, arching her delicate eyebrows ; "the dust would be simply intolerable, and old Lady Merryweather is my aversion. Besides, I never like to miss one of Mrs. Eaton's matinées. You know how I dote on music."

"What a fib !" thought Minna. "I don't believe she knows 'Rule Britannia' from the 'Dead March in Saul.'" But she made no audible remark, and the three arranged to meet later at Mrs. Eaton's.

Clementina had a charming little house in Park Street, and she prided herself greatly on the artistic arrangement of her rooms. Her establishment was small, but the servants were admirably drilled and kept up to the mark by a young lady—a cousin—who acted as a sort of satellite or humble companion to the fair widow. Indeed, much of the credit Mrs. Somers received for perfect taste, both in personal and household adornment, should have been placed to this young lady's account.

On returning from her matutinal airing in the Row, Clementina was not in the best of tempers, and Mary Grey had rather a bad time of it. Everything was wrong ; the cutlets at luncheon were pronounced uneatable, the claret corked, the flowers faded, and the lap-dog's condition anything but what it should be.

Fortunately Mary had the command of temper proper to a dependent and a poor relation ; she listened to all the complaints in silence and with eyes meekly downcast, and afterwards went through her customary duty of dressing her patroness, for Mrs. Somers kept no maid ; Mary was more skilful and so much cheaper than the ordinary run of Abigails ; without evincing a scintilla of the wrath that was smouldering in her bosom.

But when the lady had departed, arrayed in full war-paint and feathers, as the irreverent Miss Grey put it, the humble companion performed a sort of *pas d'extase* round the room, looked at herself in the glass—she was very pretty, for her grey eyes were wonderfully bright and expressive and her complexion was simply perfect—shook her fist at the lap-dog, sang a snatch of a popular French chansonette, and finally subsided into the most comfortable easy-chair in the room, and drew from her pocket a letter, which she read more than once.

"Ah, my dear cousin Clementina," she said aloud, smiling maliciously, as she carefully refolded the letter and put it back into her pocket : "you are very well in your way, tolerably good-looking, when *en grande tenue*, but not clever. There's a great deal more on your head than in it. Why you are not even clever enough to ——"

Here she paused, and a queer smile fluttered over her rosy lips.

"Well, well ! but I confess I should like to balance the social scales more justly," she mused thoughtfully, tracing out the pattern of the carpet with her pretty foot. "I do think it hard that Mesdames Somers, Desmond and Co. should have all the pleasure and I all the trouble and worry. Why shouldn't I have my amusements too ? Of course, I can always have the fun of laughing at my dear cousin's weaknesses behind her back, but I have to do it so often that it palls. I really must strike out something new. Let me think."

For some minutes the young lady sank into a brown study, puckering her white forehead into a thoughtful frown and drawing quite a network of designs on the carpet with the point of her shoe. At last a brilliant idea darted into her brain, and she started to her feet with a cry.

"Eureka ! *That* will do. Nothing could be better. Ah, what fun I'll have ! My dear Clementina, I shall be able to cry quits with you at last. You have made me pass many a bad quarter of an hour, in return for which I shall play you as pretty a trick as ever woman's wits hatched !" And she burst into a peal of such merry, silver-toned laughter that the lap-dog roused himself from his afternoon siesta and barked a joyous response.

During the next few days, Miss Grey's manner was as demure as ever while in the presence of her patroness, but when evening came, and Mrs. Somers betook herself to ball, reception or theatre, as the case might be, the young lady gave vent to her native high spirits by mimicking her cousin before the long mirror in Clementina's dressing-room, waltzing with the lap-dog, who loudly resented the liberty, or

singing sprightly chansonettes in her fresh, clear tones. Mary had been educated in a first-rate Parisian school, and had contrived to imbibe a good deal of French esprit along with more solid accomplishments. But oftener she fell to needlework with praiseworthy ardour, and when thus employed her spirits rose higher than ever. She would often laugh aloud from sheer inability to keep her mirth to herself, as she pictured and repictured in her busy brain what Clementina would say and how Clementina would look, when her humble companion's brilliant idea was fully matured and carried out.

The rivalry of the two widows did not abate as the days went on. Fitz was seldom to be seen without one or other by his side. Bets were freely laid on the event at the clubs, the odds varying as blonde or brunette was in the ascendant. Clementina flattered herself that she would be in first at the winning-post, while Minna was equally confident that to her would fall the honour of carrying off the Brandon Sweepstakes.

Little Fitz could but feel flattered by the open admiration of these two charming ladies. When chaffed about it at his club, he only laughed and stroked his moustache complacently, for he was extremely good-tempered, and even the scowls of Maitland and Carnforth did not ruffle him. But he had evidently not made up his mind which of the ladies was to be Mrs. Fitzgerald Brandon. He lunched one day with Clementina, but dined with Minna the next; he sat the whole evening in the opera-box of one, but he was certain to be seen in the Row the next morning with the other; and so the balance of power was maintained.

Both ladies were at their wits' end. How was this oscillating swain to be secured? It was intolerable to see him flirting openly with Minna after he had all but proposed the day before to Clementina; and vice versâ. Of course everyone was amused but the two victims, and they were really miserable. However, an event to which both had long looked forward would, they hoped, bring matters to a crisis. Lady Mabel Smith was going to give a bal masqué at her charming suburban villa on the Thames, and the widows had devised ravishing toilets for the occasion. Little Fitz would surely be subjugated at last; and there would be so many opportunities for him to propose in those delightful gardens, sloping to the river, and lit with coloured lamps à la South Kensington.

The eventful evening came at last. Mrs. Desmond, dressed as Madame de Pompadour, in rose-coloured velvet and diamonds, and Mrs. Somers, as Marie Antoinette, in pale blue satin and pearls—a small mask of black velvet concealing the face of either lady—arrived almost simultaneously at Lady Mabel's. Little Fitz, to whom both ladies had, of course, confided the secret of her incognito, had got himself up very magnificently as Louis XV., and this Mrs. Desmond considered as almost tantamount to a declaration.

The ball was a most brilliant affair; the weather was everything

it should be, warm, still and moonless ; the illuminations were gorgeous, the music good, the dresses admirable, and the wine superlative. Lady Mabel's guest's took their pleasure with less of insular sadness and more of continental liveliness than usual. Whether it was the novelty and daring of the thing, or the tact of the hostess, or the unlimited opportunities for flirtation, or the spice of intrigue and mystification introduced into the affair by the wearing of masks, it is certain that the ball was a complete success from beginning to end. Minna Desmond, however, was far from happy, for throughout the evening little Fitz devoted himself almost exclusively to her rival. The blue dress of Marie Antoinette was always to be seen in juxtaposition with the brilliant costume of Louis XV.

"I suppose he thinks as Clementina is masked, people won't talk," thought the disconcerted widow as she watched the pair.

Carnforth, who had somehow discovered that Madame de Pompadour was no other than his fickle Minna, came up to her and began to talk. At first his attempts at conversation were coldly received, but Jack was not easily snubbed, and at length she seemed to relent and gradually glided into a friendly chat.

Carnforth was delighted ; he begged for a waltz, and Minna did not refuse the request. When the dance was ended, he led his partner into one of the pleasant nooks in the garden, hoping that the widow's mood would not change before he could find courage to propose. But the lady's thoughts were still running on Louis ; she was determined not to throw up the cards yet. The first thing to be done was to get rid of Carnforth, so he was despatched to fetch an ice, much to his disgust. Just as she was about to leave the arbour in search of the recalcitrant Fitz, she was startled by a rustle in the bushes near, and a voice—Clementina's voice—whispering her name. At the same time, the bushes parted, showing the blue dress of the Queen.

"Clementina !" cried the astonished lady ; "you here ?"

"Hush, dear. I have been trying to speak to you all the evening."

"Indeed ?" retorted the other coldly ; "I thought you were better occupied."

"Oh, Minna, don't be unkind ! I thought I could depend on *your* friendship."

"My friendship ! Much you care for that, infatuated as you are by that little ——" She paused, unable to find a word strong enough to express her feelings.

"Minna, dearest, you are surely not jealous of *me* ?"

"Jealous ! no, indeed. I don't admire your pocket Adonis, your duodecimo Louis XV.," said Minna, with withering scorn.

"Then we won't quarrel over him, but unite our forces against the common foe," retorted the other with spirit.

"The common foe ? What do you mean ?"

"Just what I say. Minna, there is treachery somewhere. Someone is playing me, playing *us*, a cruel trick to-night."

"Do speak out plainly, dear," said the other, with a bitter little laugh. "I am too stupid to guess riddles."

"Come with me, then, and I will show you something more puzzling than any riddle." And Clementina drew her friend's hand through her arm and led her rapidly towards the most secluded part of the garden. "I saw them go in this direction," she went on, excitedly. "Look, Minna, don't you see a blue dress over there?"

"Yes; but there are ever so many blue dresses here to-night."

"Not like that one," whispered Clementina in her ear; "it is a facsimile of *mine*."

"Then it is not *you* Mr. Brandon has been dancing with all the evening?" replied the other, breathlessly, a light suddenly breaking in on her.

"No. He has been dancing with *my double*."

"My poor Clementina; but you are ——"

"Determined to find out who has played me this shameful trick," she interrupted, fiercely. "Now silence, or they will hear us. Here they come—they are going to sit on that seat."

Drawing the astonished Minna after her, Mrs. Somers slipped behind a large bush of seringa, which effectually screened them from view. Little Fitz and his fair companion sauntered slowly down the path, and as Clementina had predicted, seated themselves on a garden-bench close by. There was an air of tender emprossement about the former which at once struck the eager watchers.

"And you *will* give me that rose, dear Mrs. Somers," he was saying earnestly, as he bent over the small jewelled hand of the unknown.

Clementina nearly cried aloud. Oh! this was dreadful—the Adonis was positively making love to her double before her very eyes. The fair incognita laughed musically as she detached the coveted flower from her dress and gave it to the delighted Fitz.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Brandon, why should I refuse you such a trifle? I only ask one thing in return."

Mrs. Somers's heart stood still. Was she dreaming? The unknown not only wore her dress, but spoke in her voice.

"I can refuse you nothing," protested Fitz, ardently.

"Then tell me why you let that silly Mrs. Desmond monopolise you as she does? Come, confide in me; are you in love with her?"

"In love with her," he rejoined, hastily. "Oh, no; surely dearest Clementina *you* should know better than that!"

Mrs. Desmond clenched her hands. "Oh! the little hypocrite," she breathed.

"Then you ——" (here the unknown paused and played coquetishly with her fan) "have some feeling of—of friendship for—me?" she finished softly.

"I have the deepest, the most sincere affection for you. Until to-night I failed to realise how much I ——"

"And I am sure I shall always have a sister's affection for you," interrupted the lady, sentimentally.

"A *sister's* affection! My dearest Clementina that will not satisfy me. I want the very first place in your heart. I want ——"

The listeners behind the seringa-bush gasped. How would this dreadful affair end? Here was Fitz, the beloved of both, proposing—actually *proposing*—to an eidolon, a shadow, an unknown somebody wearing the shape of one of them, speaking in her tone, aping her manner to a nicety.

"Dear Clementina," Fitz went on, eagerly, "I love you most sincerely, I admire you above all other women ——"

"Are you quite—quite sure of that?" whispered the unknown. "Is there no one you have a secret liking for?"

Fitz hesitated for a moment. His conscience was evidently not quite clear. The lady, however, seemed in no way vexed, but laughed softly as she tapped him on the arm with her fan.

"There! I won't put too many questions. If you tell me that to-night at least I reign supreme, I ask nothing more."

Fitz took her hand and pressed it fervently to his lips.

"Dearest Clementina," he whispered tenderly; "and now I beg you will let me see the face I have been longing to look at all the evening."

Here the widows peeped eagerly through the screen of leaves, longing and yet fearing the elucidation of the mystery.

"One minute," said the unknown, putting her hand to the mask: "I wonder if you will unsay your words if ——"

"Unsay my words! never!" asseverated Fitz, passionately.

"Not even if you find you have proposed to—to the wrong woman?" said a clear, mocking voice—a voice that made the two eavesdroppers thrill with mingled terror and rage. The mask of the unknown fell to the ground as she stood up and faced her astounded admirer.

"Mary!"

"Yes, Mr. Brandon—Mary," she echoed, dropping him a mock-modest curtsy.

"Now—how did you get here?" he stammered.

"Ah, quite simply; I drove down in a hansom," laughed Mary gaily. "Come, the play is played out, so I will explain the plot as it seems to puzzle you. I wanted to see if Mary Grey, given all the advantages ladies 'in society' enjoy, could not hold her own with the best. So I made an exact copy of Mrs. Somers's dress—did you not see there was a second Queen here to-night?"

"Yes; but she wore no rose in her dress and she seemed so dull and insipid after you that I concluded ——"

"So you made the rose ——"

"The badge of grace and wit," interrupted Fitz, gallantly. "But Mary, tell me your real motive for playing this comedy of errors."

"I fear it was revenge upon both of you," said Mary, rather seriously, and yet laughing. "Mr. Brandon, you have behaved very badly to me. You have courted me, won my affections, and all the while you have toyed and trifled with the two widows as if no such being as myself existed. How can I believe in your sincerity after all your flirting, after all that has passed to-night? Do you think it nothing to break a woman's heart?" she added, somewhat tremulously.

For a moment Fitz was dumbfounded; but something in her look and tone roused all the manliness latent in him. Admiration took the place of astonishment, and his native good-nature made him forget the vexatious trick that had been played on him. His better nature also asserted itself. He felt that although his heart had always been Mary's, his flirtations with the widows had been mere pastime, though to-night, in the excitement of the moment, he had gone further than he ever intended.

"It is true I proposed to you," he said at length, "but you refused me."

"How could I do otherwise," returned Mary, "when I saw you paying as much attention to others as you did to me?"

Again Fitz was silent a moment.

"You have taught me a lesson, Mary," he cried at length, taking her hand, "but I am going to hold you to your promise all the same. If you spoke in jest, I was in earnest, and I don't withdraw a word of what I said. I am thankful that I have not gone too far, that I can still honourably ask you to be my wife. My heart is yours, and yours only, Mary; will you have me?"

"Are you in earnest?" asked Mary.

"In most solemn earnest," he replied.

"And the widows?" whispered Mary.

"You are worth a hundred thousand widows!"

Mary laughed and gave him such a charming smile that Fitz was enraptured.

"And your soubriquet?" she asked.

Fitz laughed good-humouredly.

"Someone will find me another, never fear. I shall change my name at the same time that you change yours, Mary. People have always called me a lucky fellow, but I really think Lady Mabel's *bal masqué* has brought me the best luck of all."

"He is hopelessly infatuated!" muttered Minna to her friend; "let us leave him in his fool's Paradise. She is a second Becky Sharp."

And that was the verdict of the fairer half of society. But Mrs. Fitzgerald Brandon holds her own, nevertheless, for her masculine admirers pronounce her the "prettiest, wittiest and brightest woman in London."

FOOTSTEPS.

IN the moonlight, soft and mellow
 Shine the ripples of the stream ;
 And, like sparks of living fire,
 In the moss the glow worms gleam ;
 Every rush and every tree
 Cast lone shadows o'er the lea,
 And except my heart's loud beating, all is silent as a dream.

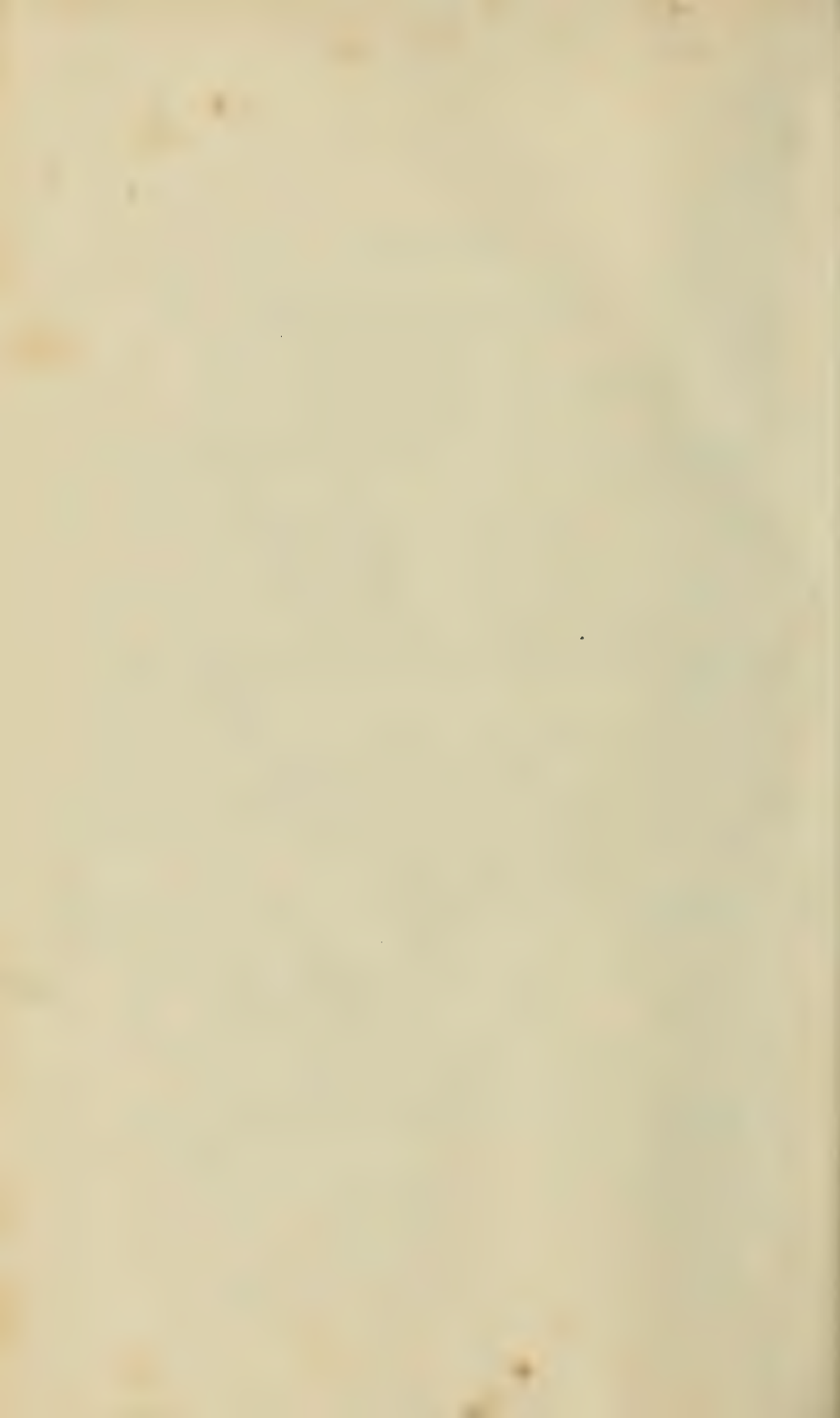
Ah, my heart be still a moment !
 Surely 'twas a sound I heard,
 Louder than the gentle rustle
 Of some happy nestling bird—
 Peace, my heart, and let me hear—
 Are there footsteps drawing near ?
 Nay, 'twas but some dreaming squirrel in the hazel copse that
 stirred !

Hark ! 'tis surely footsteps yonder—
 I can hear them clearly now,
 Louder than my fond heart's beating—
 Louder than the brooklet's flow—
 O'er the dew besprinkled lea,
 He is coming back to me.
 In the moonlight where we parted, two long weary years ago.

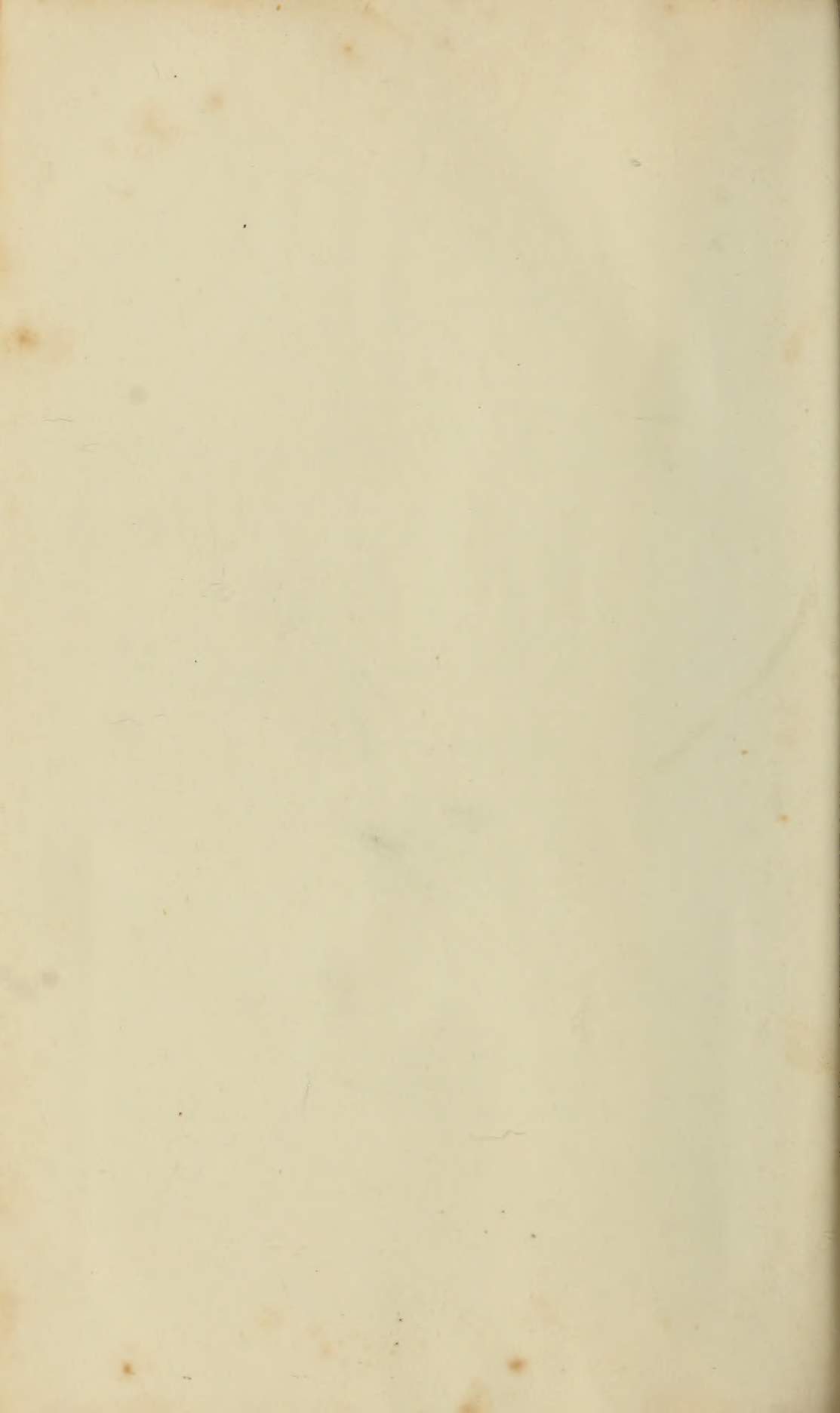
Ah, I cannot see his features—
 Cannot greet him as he nears,
 For my hungry eyes are blinded
 By a mist of happy tears,
 But that footstep light and fleet
 Is the music dear and sweet
 That my heart and I have longed for through the leaden-footed
 years.

H. M. BURNSIDE.









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The Argosy

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